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Joseph Knight
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KING WILLIAM I.

By the same Author

RIVER SONGS AND OTHER POEMS

THE GREEK KALENDS

KING WILLIAM I.

THE CONQUEROR

BY

ARTHUR DILLON

LONDON
ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET
1905

PART I.

173523

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

HENRY, King of France.
WILLIAM THE BASTARD, Duke of Normandy.
MALGER, his Uncle, Archbishop of Rouen.
LANFRANC, Prior of Bec, } Italians.
ANSELM, one of his Monks, }
ULF, Bishop of Dorchester, a Norman.
RALF DE CRONCHES, } Norman Knights.
WILLIAM MALET, }
GEOFFREY MARTEL, Count of Anjou.
MATILDA OF FLANDERS, afterwards Wife to Duke William.

BISHOPS, MONKS OF BEC, BARONS OF FRANCE AND NORMANDY, A MESSENGER AND ATTENDANTS.

Scene—Flanders. *After the First Scene*—France.

KING WILLIAM I.

SCENE I.

A Street in Bruges.

(*Enter* WILLIAM *and* MATILDA.)

WILLIAM. By the splendour of God,
Haughty Matilda, I will curb thy pride,
If it dare jet on me.
MATILDA. Proud man, speak not of such a tie,
We are too close and german to each other;
We stand in the prohibited degree.
WILLIAM. Of that will we make sport.
MATILDA. The hindrance is not that,
Wholly nor chiefly; in my morality,
That's not the impediment; for thy birth's blot,
Thou art not to my liking. I endure
No such base bridegroom.
WILLIAM. Take thought;
Thou art no stronger in my hand than were

A brittle mussel shell. Take thought.
MATILDA. There are those shall avenge
If thou dost injury.
WILLIAM. Now, by my soul,
And by my mother's ghost, that shall not boot.
For I can meet their anger equally,
Though it be kings that storm; bruise them to mummy;
And like a lusty blacksmith, pound them flat;
Or if they work in craft, meet them in craft;
I have both head and hand. Take thought.
MATILDA. I do;
To scorn thee much, and scorn thy threats yet more.
WILLIAM. Be well advised; disdain the lordly world,
But not Duke William.
MATILDA. Venomous contumely
Of sickly loathing wither up that name
Out of the book of life. Hast thou the face
So to "*Duke William*" it? Thy mother washed
And fulled our linen.
WILLIAM. I thank thee that thou flout'st me to my face;
And I have note of it. Down on both knees,
To obtain pardon. Grovel for it, now;
At no less price I grant it. Grovel prone.

Nay, thou shalt kiss my feet.
MATILDA. Will you beat me?
WILLIAM. I will;
And I shall rack thee, every day I live,
With some or other invasion of thy peace.
This is but one of many, if need be,
That shall waylay thee.
MATILDA. Freebooter,
Thou brutal robber, be thine own disgrace;
Buckle dishonour on thy shoulders, as
A complete armour; and in brazen shame
Plate thyself over, as the tortoise is
Impenetrably hard.
WILLIAM. So be it; in mail
I make war on thee.
MATILDA. Warfare?
WILLIAM. Beyond peace-making.
MATILDA. Past
Peace-making, then I hate thee.
WILLIAM. Hate, yet yield.
Lay both thy little hands in mine.
MATILDA. Gript! I must beg—
Outrage that I must beg a boon of thee—
For mercy.
WILLIAM. Do so!

MATILDA. Pity me!
WILLIAM. Not I!
Brag that thou checkest my wish; and vainly nurse
Revenge, for comfort.
MATILDA. I will not retaliate.
WILLIAM. I spurn thee;
Trample thy rich stuffs under-foot in mire;
Rip off these tinsel trappings, and, disgraced,
With hair dishevelled, for a thing of mirth,
Drive thee with blows and laughter. Make a start;
Run draggle-tail for home. O scalding tears
That mourn the downfall of your pride, keep in;
Nay, I will dam them with a kiss.
MATILDA. What shall I do for shame?
WILLIAM. Love, like a lioness, where thou art quelled.
For I am lion-like, and will control
Woman or man. Give over; dry thy tears;
And be my bondswoman and wedded wife,
To tyrannise over the suzerains
Of many fiefs of France, which I will cause
To humble themselves under my handy-cuffs.
No more, I say; thou art mine.
MATILDA. I have no choice; most foul compulsion is
The solemnising priest when we shall wed.

Only this last condition grant my side
And losing party; in the game of chess
Thou wagest with surrounding monarchies,
But chiefly when thou claim'st the English crown,
Be overbearing, and a wedge of steel
To rend thy way through every opposite
That fronts thee; that my boast be honourable
And good in fact when I shall swear my lord
Won me because he never is withstood;
But like the headway of the eternal sea
That flows round England, parting her from us,
Is never baulked, but from the fore-shore takes
Devoured acres. Be so much a man
As to be ocean-like, and my free will
Becomes the chain of my captivity,
And rocky dungeon that preserves me thine,
Thou indomitable ruler.

WILLIAM. Sweet partner of my rule,
A kiss. What day of these three hundred odd
Shall we rejoice with marriage? For no thrift
Lives in delay, when we determine on't.

MATILDA. What day soever please you; which shall be,
Even from then, the fattest of the year.

WILLIAM. Thy kin shall all be there.

MATILDA. I will accord them.
WILLIAM. They shall accord; or I
Will make them sick with discord.
MATILDA. Please to be gentle, love.
Above my peerage will I prize thy might,
Thy glorious fortune and thy strategy
I'll blazon with my needle, and make live
A witness to the days, in lively art,
Strong as truth is, being true.
WILLIAM. Good works in a wife,
If thou wilt do't. What traveller is here,
Whose sea-sick face speaks volumes?
(*Enter* ULF OF DORCHESTER.)
By the Most High,
Ulf, Bishop of Dorchester.
ULF. Far less, Duke William;
A fugitive whose life is in his hand.
MATILDA. What tidings? What betides?
ULF. Disdaining exile,
Godwin, with his two sons, Harold and Gurth,
Is sailed up Thames, annuls his banishment.
London hath risen on the Norman ministers
Of the good king. I am flung forth.
WILLIAM. You fled tamely then?
ULF. Tamely?

At every step, a man dead to my hand.
But, Godwin the Wolfnothingar thus in flood,
England is now no Normandy; and thou,
Save royal Edward's self, hast not a voice
To call the regal hoop to thee; nor hand
To waft it theeward.

WILLIAM. That with thy news
Goes hand in hand, I know.

ULF. How wilt rebuild
Thy interest there; when I, the Primate an
So many bishops and knights temporal
Lie so in ruins? Robert of Jumiéges,
Our Norman Archbishop of Canterbury,
Cut his way to the sea with me.

WILLIAM. I shall not choose, by any interference,
To check my kinsman Edward; nevertheless
My strength is his for the asking. Duchess Elect,
Our wedding's my first business.

(*Enter* A MESSENGER.)

MESSENGER. Sir, sir, sir!

WILLIAM. Speak, sir!

MESSENGER. Ill tidings fly apace.

WILLIAM. Well, sir!

MESSENGER. The King of the French,
othing dismayed by how his host so late

Bit the dust around Arques——

WILLIAM. He felt our sword there. Well?

MESSENGER. With new incursion, on thy dukedom pours
An overwhelming force.

WILLIAM. I will hang on him,
Until my hour and my advantage serve
To overwhelm his overwhelming. Arm!
I am less moved than when my Western towns
Revolted, and I quelled them. What his bulk
And line of march are thou shalt let me know.
My hands are full; England must wait or go.
Our banns are up, Matilda. Lord Bishop, thou'rt
Well come to marry us. Our thanks. (*To* MESSENGER.)
I'll boast
Upon the morrow of a victory.
After the last sun sets upon my life
Will be good time for panegyrics on't.
Here is a summer-full of fight in store.
(*Exeunt* OMNES.)

SCENE II.

Normandy. The French Camp.

(*Enter* KING HENRY *and his* BARONS.)

HENRY. We have possessed. On either side the Seine,
Our stout confederates march ; for so I call
Ye, loyal vassals who have carved with me
Such highways through the Norman land as bring
Well-gotten plunder, from our wealthiest fief,
Into your coffers and our privy purse,
Proportionably weakening Normandy
Whose hand, too strong already, would full soon
Muzzle us from the sea, and quite cut off
My Paris from salt water.

1ST LORD. Our friends upon the eastern bank,
Gathered from Rheims, from Soisson and from Laôn,
Noyon and Amiens, Meulan on the Seine,
From Beaumont on the Oise, from Brie and Provins,
Do lie at Mortemer, safe from assault ;
ıd count their gains. William dare not approach.

2ND LORD. A fig for William and his marriage made
In such presumptuous-preposterous haste,
That, being made, Rome straightway disallows.
3RD LORD. A marriage that disgraces Flanders' child
Needs must make William as a stench to Flanders.
1ST LORD. Is it a fact the wedding late at Eu
Is but a nullity in canon law?
2ND LORD. Duke William's power is but a nullity
In everything, I think, if he stand by,
An idler, while we busily deflower
His choicest cities.
HENRY. We must not so presume.
At Val-ès-dune we saw him; and his charge
Was like the reckless prince of Hell let loose
With nothing left to lose. 'Tis husbandry
Keeps him so still; a husbandry well learned;
That well may prove most dangerous. Nobles,
With other matter, comes this sidelong word,
Godwin is dead in England, William's foe
I speak this for no troubling of my friends
But for I think you constant.
3RD LORD. Godwin is dead?
1ST LORD. Let him be dead an he will. My liege,

You chain a log upon our airy spirits;
And chide us as unlettered boys. We know
Duke William is too weak for us. Our friends
Lodging at Mortemer now waste his goods
In riotous living; and we here, well housed,
What hinders but that we should do the same?
Let us unlade our cares, unstop the wine
In generous but not excessive mirth,
And fall to.

HENRY. That is well done already. To our beds;
And in the morning, with an appetite
For further doing, let us up betimes.
Something more won, we will to Paris home;
And every one of you shall bear away
Captives to ransom, rich gowns for your wives,
Equivalent to that we take ourselves.

2ND LORD. Shall we not rend a fortress, here and there,
From Normandy's fair skirt?

HENRY. By no means, no.
Tillières we hold, which forethought bade us seize
In William's nonage, whereby do we guard
Our cherished fields upon the Norman side;
But more shall not be ceded; lest we fall
enmity and strife among ourselves,

In the division. What is movable
We carry off; but the unmoved ground,
With weight of towns and castles on it piled,
I will not meddle with, nor cut a rood
To enrich one of you. Well, sirs, good-night.

LORDS. Good rest be to your royal Grace.

(*Exeunt* LORDS.)

HENRY. It shall be to-morrow,
That we will sack their cities.

RALF (*within*). Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!

HENRY. What cry is that?

RALF (*within*). Up Frenchmen, bury your friends
Now lying dead at Mortemer.

(*Re-enter* LORDS.)

LORDS. My liege, my liege!
Whose voice is that?

HENRY. I care not whose. What is the burden of it?

1ST LORD. He says our dead, lying at Mortemer,
Should have our care to burial.

2ND LORD. Belike it is a trick,
A likely stratagem the Norman uses,
To throw us into fear.

HENRY. What is the last report
We have from Mortemer?

1ST LORD. For certain, that half-army portioned off
To harry Western Normandy lies there,
In much relaxing of its vigilance,
After successful foray.

(*Enter* RALF DE CRONCHES *and* 3RD LORD.)

3RD LORD. Here is the lord whose voice affrighted us,
Come in an herald's office to your Grace,
With such accredited and flawless proof
Of our faint fears and his courageous boast,
As we refuse but at our peril.

HENRY. What is thy name,
And in what office art thou come to us?

RALF. Ralf de Cronches is my name; my office is
To serve the Norman Duke, not being the least
Of those who serve him.

HENRY. We recognise thee.
What is thy burden? Of what wouldst thou speak?

RALF. A wild night's work, my lord. But am I safe?
Ye, my good fellow Frenchmen, am I safe?

HENRY. In person, perfectly.

RALF. That is as it should be.
For, were a hair of mine to suffer wrong,
Duke William is hard by, to pluck a bristle

For every hair of mine.

1ST LORD. We know him near;
And know him quiet also.

RALF. That's nothing to my tale
Which William straitly charged me to unfold
With courtesy and merry circumstance;
Bidding me come this very hour to you;
And join your concourse gathered round your hearth.
Have I your leave?

HENRY. Now, in Saint Denis' name, say on!

RALF. Brim you full beakers, and sit down, my lords.

3RD LORD. Methinks we sit too long. There are tales breathed
By sundry different mouths already, sire.
The saddle be our seat, the road our board,
By my advice.

RALF. Will ye not hear me, friends?
Roger of Mortemer came in the night;
Whereas his guests, your fighting men, lay camped,
Despite of him, there in his very town.
And look you what he did; the night being dark
And somewhat chilly—Oh, sirs, do not stir—
He made a very kitchen of the place;
Lighted them as they slept. Oh, it was sport
To see them leap at midnight from their beds.

This man would mount his horse, but, oh, bad luck,
He had mislaid the bridle over-night,
And could not so away. In the next house,
As I have heard, one could not find the door;
But round and round within must grope i' the dark;
Until the fire made all the walls fall down
Flat as the ancient wall of Jericho.
It was a sight to see the half-armed rout
Press down the broadway where our posts were set
That headed them back. It was three o'clock,
Broad daylight overdone, ere all were dead
Or fled, or gently led, our captive spoil.
Now, sirs, what think ye of't. A good night's work
Which can be done again.

1ST LORD. We are in arms, and warned.

2ND LORD. This may be, as I say, a false device.

3RD LORD. No, certainly, there is no doubt of it.
There are some run-aways escaped. Besides,
There is a swifter post than kings command,
In flying rumour that reflects the truth
Even as a Jack-a-Lantern from the sun,
Flashing off burnished steel. The camp is full
Already with the bruit of this; and dread
Looks outward in the dark, for burning brands
ıd the attack of darkling enemies.

Pale expectation, more than a surprise,
Disqualifies our men. They would throw down
Their arms but at a voice, as they are now.
My counsel is we pack our sumpter mules,
Whiles we have lading, and set out for Paris,
Giving up Rouen and Lisieux. Ere dawn,
Let us be hence.

1ST LORD. And leave our standing tents behind.

RALF. Speed you well on the road, my noble lords.

(*Exit.*)

HENRY. Home in some order, howbeit with speed.
We may no better. Let us but outmarch
William's pursuit; we will ensconce our heads
Within our fenced towns, turning the tables
Upon assault. We are unbroken yet;
And in no danger, moving hence with care.
Now Normandy, I leave you for this once.

(*Exeunt* OMNES.)

SCENE III.

Lisieux.

Enter WILLIAM *and* MATILDA, FRENCH LORD, MALGER, LANFRANC *and* BISHOPS, RALF DE CRONCHES, BARONS *and* ATTENDANTS.)

WILLIAM. My liege lord is in Paris once again?
FRENCH LORD. I have said that he is.
RALF. I trow he be indeed.
I, from a tree-top which I climbed, declaimed
Good argument for that. I was sent out
To break the news of Mortemer to the King;
And climbing so, and shouting so, gave forth
The message in me to the King in bed.
WILLIAM. He hath dispersed his powers?
FRENCH LORD. Except his household strength,
He is alone in Paris.
WILLIAM. The King is better on his throne,
Than making havoc in his vassal's fields.
Am I not loyally his, with homage done?
My due is help against invading foes;
Not his participation in their wrong.

When I ride forth, I ride not like a thief
For plunder; either I acquire a land,
A castle, or a province, but sting not
My neighbours with these tyrannous inroads
Which yield disgrace only on either side.
This nobler pattern is worthier a prince.
Tell thy good master, tell King Henry so.

FRENCH LORD. Henry must hear rebuke; and I herein
Am lips, ears, tongue unto the King of France
Who bids thee recollect at Val-ès-dunes
How ably he discharged whatever debt
He owed in thy protection.

WILLIAM. I do not forget.
See, sweet Matilda, our acknowledged right
Of succour and befriending from the French.
What are the articles besides?

FRENCH LORD. Fullest compliance with thy reasoned wish;
A free hand in thy war begun, to spoil
The Angevin; and thy investiture
With all thy conquests there, in feudal right,
To the full utterance of Henry's voice
And power to give the same.

MATILDA. This treaty is writ fair.

Will you sign to it, my lord?

FRENCH LORD. This one condition more, that you enlarge
Our lost who live within your prison wards.

WILLIAM. Let them buy liberty from them that keep them,
And they are free; only their harness rests
In those hands that possess them.

FRENCH LORD. This concludes.
Thus, in the name of Henry King of France,
I set my signet here.

WILLIAM. This too shall speak for me.
Prosperity to our great Over-lord.

MATILDA. And to thyself.

(*Exit* FRENCH LORD, *attended.*)

WILLIAM. And now, in relative peace, I will despatch
Home matters. Here I gather at Lisieux
A goodly synod of episcopal weight
To sit in judgment, woe that it must be,
Upon mine uncle, Metropolitan
Of Rouen. Is the consistory met?

BISHOPS. We are met.

WILLIAM. Mine uncle, Lord Archbishop of Rouen,
Malger, stand forth.

MALGER. What I am charged with, I confess,
To save some tediousness. I have lived well,
Not in the Church's meaning. I have chased
The roebuck and wild boar, fed like a count,
And like a count made merry on such messes
As wine and women serve. What would you, peers?
Shall I belie my true-born lineage,
To be a puling priest and anchorite?
My mother and my father wedded, and
I am as they were.

LANFRANC. We have to look
Not at the birth but being of a man;
And scandal, like a wildfire among thorns,
Crackles too loud here. Malger must make room
For some more chastened soul.

WILLIAM. Lanfranc, good Prior of Bec,
Thou hast condemned. What, uncle, dost thou say
Of wedded parents?

MALGER. What thou canst not say.
And, furthermore, I tell thee, nephew mine,
Whose dispossessing me cows not my speech,
But rather frees my tongue, thy marriage lines
Weigh not the parchment they are written on.
Thou and Matilda of Flanders, saith the Pope,
Speaking in Council and all solemn form,

Though she hath flung herself into thine arms
And proud embraces, without modesty,
Are never man and wife.
WILLIAM. Let the silence of Death
Be on thee if thou speak another word.
Hence, to the Isles of the Côtentin, to waste
Thy life in them. Maurilius shall take
Thy Primacy, whose pious walk strays not
To evil speaking of the chastest Duchess
That ever blessed a Duke.
MATILDA The chastest Duke
That ever blessings on his Duchess rained.
Out of thy evil life thou speakest, man,
Soiling fair names with thy foul-uttering tongue;
We are true wedded most religiously.
LANFRANC. Softly and fair. My voice shall go
along
With the condemning of Archbishop Malger
Even to deportation. But, also,
Let us uphold strict justice and the law,
Not only for the abandoned, but as well
For those whose rectitude hath shone so smooth
They cannot fear the ugly rubs of time.
Beware of such a state; fear it, lord Duke,
Lest it become presumptuous to assume

Indulgences for sin. There is no doubt
But that thy marriage is not anything;
Thou art a bachelor; a spinster thou.
Make haste therefore, although it be so late,
To part and live apart. For every hour
Of this unsanctified concubinage
Is time mis-spent, and service to the fiend.

WILLIAM. First, let mine uncle sail, as was decreed.

(*Exit* MALGER).

(*To* MATILDA.)

Next, give me pardon, that these rude wild words
Have dared to call more colour to thy cheek
Than hath its home-life there. Now for Lanfranc,
My learned Prior of Bec. Lawyer thou art;
And thou canst find evasion where thou wilt,
The wise concession and dispensed rule,
Whereby the house may stand upon a rock,
We dredging out the sand. This hath been done
For lesser cause than this dear union
Thou hast no force to break.

LANFRANC. Thou hast no force to bind
Seek dispensation ere an act be done;
Not afterwards; or the bad precedent
Encourages to err; as who should say,
Let us sin on; and, afterwards, the Church

What is done shall accept as well done. No;
Get thee home, madam. Get thee to thy knees,
Proud sir, who hast done well by me and mine,
But hast not bought my soul. Affinity
Is such a bar as makes the East and West
Impossible to unite. Wash yourselves clean,
Before we can absolve you.

WILLIAM. I have kept very calm;
Because I know thou art not as Malger is;
But thou hast overflowed my sufferance
Till it is drowned. Madam, come with me hence;
And shut the windows on these ribaldries
That speak against us. Lanfranc, Italy
May shield thee, but not Normandy, for this.
Before I march on Anjou, with the force
About me ready, I will ravage thoroughly
The lands of Bec thy Priory; till it drive
Thee, the maligner of my lawful spouse,
Out of its bosom. If thou love its cells,
Quit them, ere I destroy them on thy head,
Till not a stone holds of them.

LANFRANC. From such a Duke a lawyer best is far.
I'll but to Bec, to take my books and scrip,
And speak some parting words to Anselm there,
at shall be strengthening to us both; then heaven

Shall show her stars to guide me otherwhere.

(*Exit.*)

WILLIAM. Ye, my great Barons, press the Angevin
Geoffrey Martel; I am for ploughing up
Much corn-land for this contumely, at Bec.
Let the Court rise.

(*Exeunt* ALL *but* WILLIAM *and* MATILDA.)

MATILDA. Thou'lt hear me slandered, no?—nor cast me off?

WILLIAM. Thou findst it so?

MATILDA. Is it not heartbreaking, a thing for tears
Of sharp vexation and of spite, to list
These haughty Churchmen, wagging their proud tongues
Against me, thee, and this our ducal house?
Was it before no priest, nor in no Church,
Before no altar, that we stood and bound
Ourselves together, that this after-thought
Dares to impugn us?

WILLIAM. The Council sitting at Rheims
Spake in full and at large. What we have dared
We must outdare to the end.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE IV.

A Hall in the Priory of Bec.

(*Enter* LANFRANC, ANSELM *and* BRETHREN.)

LANFRANC. Put together my chattels, my brethren. It is even so, Anselm. I must hence. What books and necessaries my saddle-bags will hold, let me have; but especially my books.

ANSELM. Whither wilt? Good father, thou art faint and way-weary.

LANFRANC. And every hour of my rest here, Anselm, is an hour of ravage on our lands.

ANSELM. That is past gainsaying. On the poor plough-boy and the farmer's wife falls still the heaviest stroke. Peace would we buy, but at an honest price.

LANFRANC. My poor jade is fallen lame by the way from Lisieux. Can you, my brethren, fettle me up another steed out of our stables? Have we none laid to grass?

ANSELM. Our poverty appears even in this our ck.

LANFRANC. Split peas and re-shoeing must serve our turn. Let our farrier see to it. Duke William in person is before me on our farms, burning up hay and corn, homestead and sheepcote.

ANSELM. Oh, that a great man should make war upon such silly garniture. But thy rebuke to him was just, father; and we suffer cheerfully.

LANFRANC. I will to Bologna back, whence I first set out. But let me fill up the half hour while my poor beast stuffs his hide with oats; let me recount what you should remember, but may have in part forgotten. Brethren, before I knew you or this your monastery of Bec, by great grace from Italy to Avranches I came; and thence journeying, so was my hap that I fell among thieves who left me penniless, bound to a tree. So was my hap, or the good ordinance of my angel. Well ye wot I was, up to that time, a Doctor in the Civil Law. But on that day, unbound and succoured by such poor husbandmen as now suffer in our cause, was I brought here among you, to the peace of Bec, to Herlouin, your then Prior, at whose feet I fell and kissed them. This is long, but I will say on a while. He, entreating me with such tenderness, turned my mind never to depart, but to wear your holy habit, wherein I

think you know I have laboured, teaching scholars in what knowledge and learning I have, turning my thoughts to die among you. But now, needs must I depart; my poor palfrey stands by; my need, not his fitness ready.

ANSELM. Father, let the drops of the dew and the song-birds overhead be ministers unto you. Think them the bodies of our prayers, which we will make alway here, for thy safe keeping.

LANFRANC. Say not too much, for it is sad leaving home. A monk must carry the Word in his heart, lest he grow to love these your kind faces too dearly. A poor man I came among you, and a poor man I go forth from among you; yet richer than the Duke in contentment, and in the treasure of a clean mind.

ANSELM. Verily I held better hope of Normandy; for he appeared loving toward the Church and her learning, helpful to simple men, and to evil-doers only the thing he proves to us.

LANFRANC. He brooks not to be withstood. Fling on my saddle-bags; lest our roof-tree fall for it. I have three good companions on my journey—the truth boldly spoken, a trust in heaven unshaken, and a brain well crammed and seasoned that will buy me roosting-place anywhere.

ANSELM. I will lead your nag some step, with mine own hand, father. Life, father, is full of partings, and this an unkind one.

LANFRANC. A kindly one from you.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE V.

The Road near Bec.

(*Enter* WILLIAM *and* ATTENDANTS.)

WILLIAM. I am impatient of this harrying;
And yet it must be done. Anjou is up;
And against Anjou would I match myself;
But that the taint Bec, in her Prior, breathes
First must be blown away. Who was it said,
Lanfranc had set his foot upon the road,
And was forth a day's journey?

(*Enter* LANFRANC.)

Why lagging here?

LANFRANC. Betimes this morning was I in the saddle;
And I have ridden, baiting time allowed,
Till now, when evening shows the folding star.

WILLIAM. This is not one day's journey forth.

LANFRANC. My horse, the best we have,
Serves for no more. Give me a better, Duke,
And I will ride the faster.

WILLIAM. How? Less than nimble feet
When my desires are hasty and for speed?
Or shall wild horses drag thee? I never heard
A criminal ask of his judge a gift
Upon his doom. Ought I to give relays
Of roadsters by the stage for thee? Stay a while;
Sith thou'st a tongue and thereto hast a wit
Swifter of motion than thy palfrey seems,
Give me thy jottings by the way, thy thoughts
On England. For, while sitting at the mess
Beside King Edward on his throne, no warning
Given, but while the feast was hot on the spits,
Earl Godwin, foaming at the mouth, teeth set
And his eyes rolling, fell dead. Learnedly,
How dost thou riddle this? Whose hand is here?
What special judgment palpable on guilt
In Edward's brother's murder and of those Normans,
Suspect, not proven, not to be brought home
To one so highly placed? Is this not taught
In doctrine of divines?

LANFRANC. I think you would have it so.
For Godwin hath in England been thy bane,
And leveller of thy projected hopes.
But of all this believest thou no whit.
Thou art not to be taught, old men must die;

It is their right of appeal from earth to heaven.
Godwin hath been a just man, and made wince
The foul, self-seeking flatterers of his king
Who hath, belike, counsellors good and wise
As Godwin ever proved, in Godwin's sons;
And therefore Godwin dies and Harold lives,
Neither therein accused. I but instruct
Where thou, Duke William, couldst as well teach me,
As I thee.

WILLIAM. I love thee; thou art subtle and true;
A rare commingling. Yet, shall a priory
Call me to book? Thou shalt ride braver cattle;
But speak on my side. This is less a bribe,
Than a reposeful trust laid on thy neck.
But, by Saint Stephen who was stoned to death,
Fling no stone at Matilda! Canonical bars
Can be unbarred upon good argument,
Wherewith if thou wilt ply St. Peter's throne,
Thou shalt have present aid.

LANFRANC. What if I speak upon the other side?

WILLIAM. Be there in my plea.
Think how the estates of Normandy—and England
When time shall ripen—must beneath a ban
Languish and wither, if this wedlock made

Be firm but in my force. Matilda keeps
Her matron rights, whatever befall.
LANFRANC. Thou art a fool to oppose
The Pope who fathers us. Yield, son; yield, son.
So shalt thou compass best the allowance of that
Where obstinacy shall make obdurate
With equal might against thee.
WILLIAM. Go to the eternal seven hills;
With frank good-will, unveil our views in speech;
And thence, whence greater things than these have
come,
Bring dispensation from the affinity
That sticks so in the throat.
LANFRANC. Not to withdraw a jot
Of what I first advance, only to cover
The past with a white sheet of innocence,
And make extraordinary right rule out
Ordinary rule; this is not to recede.
If you confess your sin, it may well be
We may remit your sin; and, for good ends,
Smoothen the course whereby ye twain shall walk
Duchess and Duke rightful in Normandy.
Only restore to Bec her injured weal.
WILLIAM. She shall rejoice in fatness, after this.
What gold, what letters shall bestead our cause,

Let nothing lack for lack of asking.

LANFRANC. I see a plain road open,
The Holy Father well may walk upon.
I will enlarge on the inexpediency
Of punishment which must be carried out,
Once threatened, threats being inoperative
To break thee unto harness. So remains
To Rome or to forgive or to chastise;
While censures of the Church, defied by thee,
Would scathe and seethe the innocent alike
With the transgressors, the unoffending folk
Denied for thee their Christian benefits.

WILLIAM. Here, and perhaps in England afterwards.
Look, in this traffic with Rome, that I am styled
Inheritor of England, voicing repute
Of what I am.

LANFRANC. Thus, to His Holiness in Rome.
And further add how that Count Baldwin's pride
May not endure his daughter flung again,
After a show of marriage, on his hands,
If so you send her back. Thus law, driven hard,
Might ope a rupture, even to war's alarums,
With an un-Christian spilth of Christian blood,
Most hateful always to His Holiness,

Whose labour is for the Millennium;
As witness is the hoped-for Peace of God
Sought to be inaugurated. This will I stuff
With precedent cited from the remote
Or nearer past.

WILLIAM. While thou dost toil in this,
I will make headway as I may on France
Who, spite of covenant, lifts Geoffrey up.

LANFRANC. It is the French king's flattery.
Because thou art powerful, he takes the field
Against his oath, beside his vassal Geoffrey,
To have thee somewhat lower, somewhat thinned.
His policy pushes not to a point
That would destroy the Norman.

WILLIAM. I and my hunt
Will none the less chase him.

(*Enter* RALF DE CRONCHES *and* WILLIAM MALET.)
Ralf, thou art not
Our least commander. Thy place, open-mouthed,
Calls thee, where thou hast left it void. Thou comest
To chide my absence, I'll be bound.

RALF. It is almost that.
Normandy is over-run.

WILLIAM. William Malet, too.
Were there no footmen for the nonce, no runners,

To tell me so?

MALET. Our need of you in person
Makes a less call deficient. Fastened faith
Your tenants keep, of Duke against the King,
Is at a taut stretch.

RALF. Throw thy sword into the scale;
For other blades weight over light in 't.

WILLIAM. We deemed King Henry garrisoned Anjou.
Is France in Normandy? Is the Over-lord
Of Normandy a foe breaking her peace?

RALF. 'Tis no less, noble Duke. I am full sick
Till I am back at hand-grips.

WILLIAM. I have an iron here of weightier ore
To fashion while 'tis hot. Where stand our steeds,
(*To* ATTENDANTS.)
Tethered to leeward of the wood, hie; fetch
Led horses for a retinue to attend
Our emissary. Let strap thy stuff on them,
Prior, my antagonist of to-day, now turned
Into to-morrow's ally.
(*Exit* LANFRANC *with some few of the* ATTENDANTS.)
The law itself
Must veer unto my course. France, now for thee.

MALET. We mainly want for men.

WILLIAM. Farmers who have watched their barns
burn to the ground
Are for this juncture; bill-hooks and the scythe
Shall trim the Frenchman; and, for our intelligence,
Wits moulded to their country's feature shall
Sleuthhound us where this French invasion is,
If, in entanglement, it lack the trim
That betters good direction. I will take up
Crofters and fishermen, out of cottages,
Upon our march.

(*Exeunt* OMNES.)

SCENE VI.

Varaville.

(*Enter* KING HENRY, GEOFFREY OF ANJOU, FRENCH LORDS *and* ATTENDANTS.)

HENRY. Count of the Angevins,
Our principal and mover in this war,
Geoffrey Martel, thou thunderbolt of men,
Who dazzlest friend and foe with the despatch
Of execution, what sayest thou
Whose silence, like unuttered thunder, lowers
Amongst us?

GEOFFREY. King and Peers of France,
Martel, the Hammer, I have called myself,
After the sire of Pepin, Charles Martel;
For rather would I speak in clanging blows,
Than wag my beard in council at the board,
Where ticklish balance of nice form and phrase
Elbows out brawn and sinew. Will the jurists,
With their preambles, clauses, and what not,
Tricking Matilda out of her fair name,
Make nullity of marriage? Here is divorce
[illegible]t on my thigh, beside me; this long sword

Better annuls Duke William's nuptials,
Than all the doctors in the canon law,
If I come at him. Let us to the field,
And split his provinces, yea, lay them open,
Until he come in person.

HENRY. And we will so.
It is not reason that, with sheathed sword,
I watch my vassals flesh their aspiring blades
On one another. Normandy presumes
Too hardily on our treaty ratified
Unto inaction.

FRENCH LORD. It was not like a king
To sign and seal to such a bond as that.
What, to stand by, as with a fettered hand,
And watch this mis-begotten child, this bridegroom
Whose marriage and whose birth defy the Church,
Tear off the wide fringe of his neighbour's lands?
Then wert thou not a king when thus didst sign.
Now thou art king; and so art not forsworn,
Repudiating words never thine own,
But some derogative suggestion
That warped thee from thyself. Now art thou France;
And re-possessest thy ascendant sway
Over our destinies. Now thou bearest war
Into the entrails of fair Normandy.

Now like a royal progress is this march
Unchecked, unthwarted, over field, through town.
Half Normandy up to the river Dive
Which here's before us, and here's fordable,
At Varaville here, is gnawed to the bone. Go over,
And the other half of Normandy shall yield
Another such repast.

HENRY. This then is Varaville.
This stream before us is the Dive?

GEOFFREY. Varaville on the Dive, my liege, whose water
Is fordable at this place, on a low tide.

HENRY. We lead the van in person, by the ford;
And will surprise Lisieux. Geoffrey of Anjou,
Do thou make safe and well secure the rear;
Ever a post of care.

GEOFFREY. Let my care leave you careless.
Go over, with the armed men, good my liege;
Bag and baggage shall follow.

(*Exeunt* KING HENRY *and part of his* FORCES.)

And right soon.
Time have we and enough, but none to spare.
The tide is out; yet is it a sea wind
That chokes the estuary, gives it a surfeit
That will be to our girths ere we come over.

FRENCH LORD. The King rides well across.
GEOFFREY. When he hath made the bank,
The rest will move.
FRENCH LORD. The tide is met at the bar,
And cannot fall to-day; winds hold it back.
GEOFFREY. Somewhat. I say as much.
FRENCH LORD. The foremost horsemen foot the further bank.
It is upon the turn.
GEOFFREY. It hath turned, and now flows.
Let us be moving. What disorder is here?
Bid the men step in true time.
(*Enter another* FRENCH LORD.)
2ND FRENCH LORD. Either recall the King;
Or hasten after him, even as you may.
GEOFFREY. Why? There is battle and murder in thy tongue.
If the force rushes thus upon the ford,
The horses' tread will beat the bottom up,
Into great wallowing holes. What is there wrong
That shakes our numbers, like a storm in the woods,
And no man seeth wherefore?
2ND FRENCH LORD. The wherefore is at hand.
I tell thee, Count of Anjou, William the Norman
Is not an hundred paces from this spot,

Masked in a gully our blind folly left
Unsearched nor tried. He hath lain like a pard;
Crept like a snake; now rushes like a boar;
While we, unranked, are mixed with draught horses,
The teams of baggage wains, and halved by the tide,
Whose rising William knows. These are Normans.

(*Enter* WILLIAM *and* FORCES.)

WILLIAM. In, with your clubs and bills, archers and knights.
One word for all of you, bear it in mind,
These men before you here have sacked your homes.

GEOFFREY. Out on thee, reprobate, unwedded spouse,
Son of unwedded dam.

WILLIAM (*Striking him*). Bark in purgatory.

GEOFFREY. Where
Is valour's profit? Where is our array?
So brave a show as on the field had been;
So pitiable a rout as here is shown.
Unto the ford, and overtake the King;
To make some rally on the further shore.
Let who can swim, swim for it.

WILLIAM. Give them full measure.

(*Exit with his* NORMANS, *driving in* GEOFFREY *and the* FRENCH.)

SCENE VII.

A Place near the last, on the opposite side of the River.

(*Enter* KING HENRY *and his* FORCES.)

HENRY. We are across the river safe enough.
This mount gives a full view; and as its eye,
I am rooted just below the brow, movable
But as an eyeball ranging in his place,
Only to watch my rearguard cut to shreds.
Oh, to put back time by a brief half-hour;
Then stood we close compact. Who would have dreamt
That yonder fold of the hills, yon little dell,
Yon peaceful dene, looking so summer-like,
Hid Normandy's armed hand? Before we crossed
This river, where we find no crossing back,
Some of you must have had a lurking guess,
Surmising danger near.
FRENCH LORD. We are wise too late,
Too late, my liege.
HENRY. Fortune's most fickle name
Is the Fortune of War. Accursed eyes

That show me such accursed butchery!
I stand like Pharaoh on the Red Sea shore,
Watching this inlet a thick broth of men
And horses surging past. Oh France, France, France,
I am thy father, and my children die
Before mine eyes, even of this fell disease,
This death incarnate, this insatiate William.

(*Enter* GEOFFREY MARTEL.)

What, art thou from the sea bottom?

GEOFFREY. I swam the stream upon my horse.
What wilt thou do? Stand not and tear thy hair;
Wrong not its threads of silver with thy hands
Which are as rebels on thy royal head.
The tide turns in some hours; shall we not stand;
And, after, force the ford, to give as good
On these death-dealing peasants? Bats and clubs
Are bursting helmets yonder. William hath roused
The basest bondsmen on his lands to fight
Beside nobility. Stand not distraught.

HENRY. Ours is a nation's mourning. Wedged and heaped
Upon the causeway, half my army dies.
Their piteous shrieks are helpless in mine ears;
While I, with fighting men and forceful arm,
Stand ranked upon this overlooking hill,

Like saints and angels in the height of heaven
Looking on martyrdom, forbid to help,
Permitted but to wonder at it.

FRENCH LORD. The causeway leading to the ford is choked
With scarce a man alive, swept by the shafts
These Norman bowmen, like strong foresters,
Ply on their hapless quarry.

HENRY. I will to Paris straight.
Yet in what manner shall I tell the tale?
How shall I cast the story into words?
Shall I say, "Paris, open wide thy gates;
Receive thy King back from the Norman wars,
Where he hath buried or unburied left
More than a moiety of that armament
Thou France, thou Paris, trustedst to my care?"
Nay, let me creep in at the postern door,
And, all unknown, get me to bed. Vain thought;
For men would know me by my ashen cheek,
My circled eyes; and would cry, yea, the stones
Would cry aloud, "Behold our noble king
Comes creeping in before his soldiery
That never will come after."

FRENCH LORD. Sire, with good leave,
Make off at once, with such as here remain.

Swimming can save no more; the tide is full,
And brims above the dying on the banks,
Giving sea-burial to them. Off; away!
GEOFFREY. Our troops here are intact. By the
art of war,
We are not beaten yet.
FRENCH LORD. Cool not hot haste
With windy words; but march, Sire.
GEOFFREY. March, Sire. I faint; and scarce,
So much my stomach loathes the taste of flight,
Can drag foot after foot.
HENRY. Lords, retire.
As little I endure to watch the end,
As to remove my eyesight from the gaze
Of this detested battle. Peace we'll have;
Though we must buy it with some solid pledge
More than our handwriting, to be believed;
For we have broken trust. And, for my age
Will not uphold the Gallic kingdom long,
I will make firm succession in my boy,
Before I go the way of yonder flesh
That's floating on the waves. Move off at once;
And emissaries unto William send,
Deprecating pursuit.
GEOFFREY. What shall become of Anjou if you fly?

Retreat, but for advantage, not despair.

HENRY. Retreat, retreat, retreat at any rate.
Oh, I am pierced through to the very soul;
And like a widow weep the graveless dead
Perforce I leave behind. What sorrow's like
A king's that loses such a field? William,
I'll make a pact with thee, and war no more.

(*Exeunt* OMNES.)

SCENE VIII.

Rheims. A Public Place.

(*Enter together* RALF DE CRONCHES *and a* FRENCH LORD.)

FRENCH LORD. This fair olive tree springs up in a single night, like the prophet's gourd.

RALF. An the King cut it down, as he cut down the last and made firewood of it, it shall roast your goose.

FRENCH LORD. Nay; he hath given substantial surety; more than parchment rolls and contracted peace. Hath he not put the key of the borders, yea, a castle, in your hands against himself?

RALF. Restored it rather. For indeed he filched it scurvily enough, in our Duke's nonage. I grant the castle given, else were we never here at Rheims. Now is peace in the preterite tense, past and perfect. To this great crowning of the infant prince Philip, in his father's lifetime, are the subject chieftains all and each called. Are all here?

FRENCH LORD. I know of none absent, nor who would be absent from so glorious, so radiant, so happy a gathering; save that Anjou eateth his heart out for his defeat; and, taking unto himself repentant weeds, lieth at home sick unto the death for it. But here are Maine, Aquitaine, and Gascony, vieing with each other in bold show; and your own most valiant, most exalted, and fortunate Duke whose doings are none sterile, but spring up and yield an hundredfold into his garners. This way move my brother-in-law and my brother, along with certain great sirs of the Normans, as I think.

RALF. Grave William Malet, who loves not war till he be in it; and the runaway prelate, Ulf of Dorchester, who loves well to make a fight, and then loves well to be out of it, with too little Latin for a priest, and too little valour for a soldier.

FRENCH LORD. All now here on the same good errand. A fair morning.

(*Enter* WILLIAM MALET, ULF OF DORCHESTER *and other* LORDS *Norman and French.*)

MALET. A bright day broken over Rheims! Would the good King Edward of England gave so wise a precedent the flattery of following. Here the living King crowns the living heir. It is wisely done.

2ND FRENCH LORD. Now for tale-bearing on Dame Fortune; Lanfranc shall have the Abbey of Saint Stephen of Caen, the new foundation of your noblest Duke, who hath made his old enemy his factor and attorney, and will now mitre him, if Duke may.

ULF. If Duke may mitre them that lack breeding, and unbenefice high clerics at his lay displeasure. Where is Malger? In the Isle of the Côtentin, not in his See. Where am I? Not in my See; nor preferred to none in all Duke William's patronage.

RALF. Ye who cannot sit fast by merit, force nor fraud, may lie where ye may.

1ST FRENCH LORD. But ye speak of Lanfranc. The holy Prior of Bec, on his road from Rome, hearing of William's tarrying here with his Duchess whom may Saint Michael and all angels preserve—the learned Prior breaks his journey here, whose epistle is rolled up in his hand.

RALF. While we are in our compliments, and dry our lungs more in five minutes' talk than in five hours' good fight, those we speak of, my Paladin, his Lady and the wise Monk are upon us. Well met, in Rheims, Lords; we have met before, but never so peaceably.

2ND FRENCH LORD. We will emplace ourselves for the ceremony.

(*Exeunt* OMNES.)

(*Enter* WILLIAM, MATILDA *and* LANFRANC.)

WILLIAM. Wilt thou unroll thy meaning in a word,
And lay it bare?

MATILDA. Reverend Father, in your hands you hold
Condensed, distilled into the little space
Of so much sheep-skin, scratched with so much ink,
The warrant of my home's legitimacy;
Or the death-warrant of my married fame.
Let me read which.

LANFRANC. There is not whole content,
In the contents of this same sealed scroll;
Nor whole non-suiting of thy dear desire.

MATILDA. But let me read what 'tis. If thou lay sick,
How wouldst thou relish the physician
Playing with terms ambiguous? What saith the Pope?

LANFRANC. That you have sinned.

WILLIAM. There are sins whose issuant good
Ennobles them.

LANFRANC. And most presumptuously;
Not waiting for His Holiness to ease

The narrow gate, but shoving shoulders through,
Where the Church turned the key flatly against
Your passage.

WILLIAM. Art come to Rheims for this? Writing from Rome,
Thou bad'st, to purchase acquiescence, build
Two Convents, one for either sex, at Caen.
The stones are squared to do it; the masons met
With plummets, T squares, centres and all else
Congruous to their craft.

LANFRANC. What I wrote is true.
Hereby Pope Nicholas sendeth a bull
Of retrospective force, which, this premised,
Ye both kneel truly contrite, and confess
How that ye ought to have proceeded first,
Not after, in your supplication,
Gives full allowance, after the event,
To the else-forbidden joining of ye twain
In holy wedlock, the bond already bound
To be as binding from the first, which else,
In the plain course of law, were disallowed
And null from the beginning.

MATILDA. Now I begin to walk;
And these my eyes on Normandy look large;
I am repaired, rebuilt, who seemed but now

A law-breaker on this dear soil I love;
Which I love not to be.

WILLIAM. Let this be read before the assembled peers.

For much it boots us that our home should be
Strong as our dukedom in the face of heaven.
These brotherhoods endowed, these alms disbursed
Abroad, are the desires of our free will,
More than enforcement.

MATILDA. My chancel shall be built and dedicate,
Without delaying for the rest.

WILLIAM. My walls to complete girth
Shall grow, before I dedicate a bay.
King Henry yonder, with the sun in his face
Blinding him with light, royal eyes, royal light,
Covers the way with his nobility,
Toward the august ceremony of to-day,
Where we have our high place. No time more fit
Nor more auspicious to declare and shew
Our vindicated marriage bed.

(*Enter* KING HENRY, *his* QUEEN, *and* PHILIP *their Son*, PEERS OF FRANCE *and* OTHERS *attendant.*)

HENRY. Anjou lies dying; which warns our feebleness
To fear the like. William of Normandy,

Well art thou come with those who, joint with thee,
As thou with them, are equal premises
And bases of our throne. Ye are informed,
And see in this child, feudal peers of France,
Why I have gathered you as a milky way
Of glory in our heavens. William, in chief
I welcome thee, now thou dost hold me pinned
By that strong fortress which I yield thee up,
The tower of Tillières, to wit. I am
Thy sworn and loyal Over-lord, from this.

WILLIAM. Howbeit tried, witness, ye sons of France,
Fathers of her provinces, that faithfully
I have withheld my arm from direct blow
Against my king, crushing with my best force
What wings or outposts of his force I might;
But not in personal encounter fronting
That sovranty which had my knee in homage
For the proud lands I sway. So much, now more.
Who is it, in this fair assembled court,
Hath doubt of my wedding's validity;
Or that Matilda of Flanders is my wife?

MATILDA. None, surely. But if so, Lanfranc here brings
Wherewith to stop his mouth.

LANFRANC. Sire, they are man and wife.
Witness this bull. Pope Nicholas, God wot,
Sent my fair plea through much vicissitude.
WILLIAM. Rule thou over Saint Stephen's fold at Caen,
And be our Chancellor.
LANFRANC. A Pope more strenuous than Nicholas
Had been harder to reason withal.
HENRY. Duchess of the Normans,
We embrace thee with all comfort. Oh, sweet sprig
Of Alfred, that righteous and learned man
Who girt King Cedric's island first with ships,
Add lustre to thy husband. Thy offspring
Shall call Alfred the Great, as well as Rolf,
Forefather. Now to the midst of things. To France,
Henry presents for salutation
A seven-year son whom to-day crowns, King Philip.
Do ye adjourn to the high hall, and kiss
With solemn lip, even for your several lands,
Honours and dignities, the lowly feet
Of this your lovely prince.
MATILDA. Sweet prince, a kiss upon thy lips I give.
How thou dost blush, at seven years old, to take
Thy overwhelming fortune. Bravely, sir.
We will adore thee duteously.

FRENCH LORD. Far wiser than in England's Isle,
To let no havoc, like a mourner, follow
Thy wept and honoured hearse at last.
WILLIAM. That was well urged.
Though, being king, I would not do as Henry. (*Aside.*)
HENRY. Well urged,
Well pointed, if England grew wise by me.
Yet if King Edward poured his favour out,
And let the ointment of his liking flow,
Lacking this home-farm, this solicitous plat
Where we renew ourselves, as lack he doth,
Crowned anchorite upon a fruitless throne,
Not William, but a nearer head, in place
Though not in birth, would drip with regal oil.
WILLIAM. I have a promise from the sacred lips
That cannot lie.
HENRY. I mean there is a doughty man
And a born king of men in the Earl Harold.
And his propinquity may countervail,
Even by the grace of his devotion,
Or cunning of long service to his lord,
Far-off conveyance to the Norman Duke.
I speak for counsel, not after my will;
That thou mayst find a rooted occupant
Before thee, hard to dispossess, in Harold,

Who well may oust thee.

WILLIAM. The ceremony, sire, forthwith.
I had an ancestor who, at the like
Bidden stoop down and kiss, plucked up the foot,
And dandling head downwards the luckless king,
Did smack his lips against the Frankish toe,
And thus conformed to the form. But I outwear
Norweyan manners, and will not be found
Unmannerly, which to be were a blemish
In any nobly kept. As for Earl Harold,
What I have heard of him, I honour in him.
We serve your happy hour. King Edward's crown
Groweth yet green and toughly on the bough
Above our heads. When it shall drop, 'tis mine;
And I will thrust my temples under it.

HENRY. Let time fulfil itself. All France, approach.

WILLIAM. Matilda, we, being one, will rule as one.

(*Exeunt* OMNES.)

PART II.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

EDWARD THE CONFESSOR, King of England.

HAROLD, Earl of Wessex, afterwards King of England,
GURTH,
TOSTIG,
WOLFNOTH,
his Brothers,
} the Wolfnothingars.

EDWIN, Earl of Mercia.

MORCAR, his Brother; after Tostig's exile, Earl of Northumbria.

WILLIAM THE BASTARD, Duke of Normandy, afterwards King of England.

ROBERT,
WILLIAM RUFUS,
} his Sons, as boys.

ODO, Bishop of Bayeux, afterwards Earl of Kent, his Half-brother.

ULF, deprived Bishop of Dorchester,
TAILEFER, a Minstrel,
ROGER THE BIGOD,
WILLIAM MALET,
TUROLD,
VITAL,
} Normans.

Retracts as quickly what he said before.
HAROLD. He'll not deny me as I shall make suit.
With hawk and hound I'll recreate my soul
To be a fatter creature. That is my scope,
As you well know.
GURTH. I know as well how Normandy
Pretends his title through I know not what promise
Plight him when he was here, by Edward sworn to,
As he avers; not valid in our law,
Where the election of the Witenagemot
Is absolute, within the kingly house
To choose the ablest.
HAROLD. Why dost thou, like a jurist,
School me in this? Yet the like nomination
Is equally my title and sole claim
To overtop my peers, and of an earl
Create myself a king.
GURTH. Law is in doubt;
Except that England's royalty hath stood
Where an heroic foot like Alfred's can
Plant itself firm, and, rooted in the sward,
Be native, and a part of Albion
In right of grandeur. Thou art of the soil;
And we such branches of thee as shall shade
Our mothers' and forefathers' graves more seemly

Than any alien.

HAROLD. This reasoning medicines
Our own untainted bodies with the drug
That's for the sick.

GURTH. But, Harold, not to shed our leaves
Upon the King's demise—'twere blindly done
To leave the thought untongued—William the Bastard
Shall then attempt our breach. Which to prevent—
The Virtue Prudence aiding Providence—
Do thou, as in thy pastime idleness,
Journey about the flank and rear of all
His duchy, leaguing with his foes, not least
With the French King in Paris.

HAROLD. 'Tis counselled brotherly.

GURTH. That, when he stirs,
They knack his heels, and anchor him at home
With most vexatious forays.

HAROLD. Rather, for me,
My right hand for defence, and their dislike
Or fear of William, who lie next his fields,
To wound him unsolicited. Our King
Is borne this way to view his abbey church.
Let us attend him very reverently.
Ye speak too timorously, brother mine,
In ruminating on the Bastard's means.

William hath neighbours; or this land's dear peace
Had heard his insolence. How Edward's hand,
Even as mine might on a leopard's whelp,
Leans upon Tostig. In my father's son
There is more treason and less governance
Than in all dukes and kings. What merriment
Makes the King mad with laughter?

(*Enter* KING EDWARD *and* EDGIVA, TOSTIG, WOLFNOTH, EDITH SWAN-NECK *and* OTHERS *attendant.*)

EDWARD. Hah, hah, hah, hah!
I dreamt that in their cave at Ephesus
The Seven Sleepers turned from left to right;
And divine laughter shook me at my dream,
To see them turn.

HAROLD. Why let them turn them back
From right to left, and sleep as fast again;
What maketh it to us?

EDWARD. I laughed aloud.
Ye heard me how I laughed. I am full of prayer,
Of diligent prayer. Earl Harold, shape thy course
To thy desire, where thou art importunate
Gaily to follow Summer. Wolfnoth thy brother,
Whose tender youth should stay him else at home,—
Because I will no hindrance to thy joy—

By thy particular and his own strong wish,
Shall go along, while Tostig fills thy room
That spares thee ill. The Welsh war safely done
By heaven that wrought by thee, signs our release
From bold King Griffith's power. Oh! if, abroad,
Thou come to Normandy, tell our dear cousin
We hold him still for cousin and our tree
Collaterally branching.

HAROLD. My thought is toward Rome,
For pilgrimage, and Flanders, for the chase
And my disport, my liege.

EDWARD. We love France well
That knew and nursed our youth. Our votarist Queen,
And helpmeet of our virtue, I would forth
To view the masons how they square the stones.
Tostig, advise with Harold presently.

(*Exit, with* EDGIVA, EDITH SWAN-NECK *and* OTHERS *attendant.*)

HAROLD. From Cornish Land's End to Northumbria,
Men slumber in fair peace.

TOSTIG. Northumbria is a sleeping dog.

HAROLD. Tostig,
The sons of Alfgar, Edwin and Morcar,
Those envious and false ambitious earls,
Desire thy seat and land, rest thou assured.

Thou drain'st thine earldom dry, and leav'st it fallow
Of civil tillage, which is much amiss,
Spending thy time and treasure here, a course
Much quoted for neglect.

TOSTIG. By the Apostles,
Thou madd'st me, Harold.

HAROLD. In the assessment
By underlings and factors of thy state,
Thy hand is heavy.

TOSTIG. 'Sdeath, I govern savagely,
Governing savagery. The northern jade
Shall throw me, or I'll break her.

(*Re-enter* EDITH SWAN-NECK.)

EDITH. The failing King,
For so his age and his conditions are,
Calls out for Tostig.

TOSTIG. I obey my prince.

EDITH. And for Gurth, also.

GURTH. He commands.

(*Exeunt* GURTH *and* TOSTIG.)

HAROLD. Sirrah, sailors!

(*Enter certain* SAILORS.)

Carry my gear a-board at Bosham Creek.

(*Exeunt* SAILORS.)

WOLFNOTH. Shall we afloat?

HAROLD. And fair wind speed us, Wolfnoth.
WOLFNOTH. I will to our mother's knee,
And kiss her first.
HAROLD. Wolfnoth, do so.
(*Exit* WOLFNOTH.)
Edith Swan-neck,
Time is brief for parting.
EDITH. Make it briefer yet.
HAROLD. Our troth is plight.
EDITH. Thy pledge will never hold.
Thou'rt on a pinnacle of fear, and wed
To thy deserts. No oath; be not forsworn.
Thou art the soul of honour, Godwinson;
So that forswearing shall foredo thee quite,
Where lesser men might palter and be safe.
Harold, there is no other road. For me,
My fame will be our infamy of love;
A crown will gild thy forehead, never mine;
We are not king and queen.
HAROLD. We are man and woman.
We are betrothed at the church door. Stay!
EDITH. I had rather stay my words than stay myself,
Harold Wolfnothingar, Harold Wolfnothingar.
HAROLD. Wish me well.

EDITH. *Were wishes horses*, Harold Earl of Wessex,
Beggars would ride.

(*Exit* HAROLD.)

Wish thee well, Harold?
With memory for hope, here Edith kneels,
Praying all angels to keep Harold safe,
And crown him safely king. I who have known
Plenary bliss, can I endure to see
A queen supplant me, with no pang beyond
My scorn of her, she being so much less
His queen than I his darling?

(*Exit.*)

SCENE II.

Ponthieu. A rocky Coast. Thunder, lightning and wind.

(HAROLD, WOLFNOTH *and* SAILORS *discovered upon a Rock. Enter, ashore, certain* FISHERMEN.)

1ST FISHERMAN. An English ship is on the rocks.
2ND FISHERMAN. She goes to pieces!
1ST FISHERMAN. Some of her people are on yonder ledge.
2ND FISHERMAN. Bring lights.

(*Exeunt.*)

HAROLD. What splits our bark saves us.
This bed on which we lie awake, this shelf—
What though the black troughs all around us yawn?
This ledge of rock is narrow; yet 'twill serve.
Dry land it is not; yet it is as firm
As Coventry.

SAILOR. Alack, Earl Harold, so our graves are, sir.

HAROLD. Be of good cheer, brave hearts. What though our ship,
Like a false wanton, cast us out to swim,

We are not sunk, we are not sunk, I say.
What, lights? What, ho! But, Wolfnoth, hold thy tears,
Good boy, for manhood shame. What, ho! What light?

SAILOR. I think these wreckers; for the fishermen,
Of ill repute for inhumanity,
Are so, along this coast.

HAROLD. Ho, ye who carry light!

(*Re-enter* FISHERMEN, *ashore, with lights.*)

1ST FISHERMAN. What a pother's here; are not thunder and wind enow?

HAROLD. Friends, help us.

1ST FISHERMAN. Heave them a line.

2ND FISHERMAN. Save a drowning man; and his hand shall slay thee.

1ST FISHERMAN. A ransom in gold shall bury thee richly. This is a fat fish, a right sturgeon. Heave, I say.

HAROLD. Make fast the slack. Now, Wolfnoth.

WOLFNOTH. What will they with us?

HAROLD. I cannot tell. Swing we us up the rocks. Sea-kings or sea-wolves, which they are is all our hope of safety.

WOLFNOTH. I do fear *sea-wolves.*

1ST FISHERMAN. A haul, a haul to-night! Bind each as he comes ashore.

HAROLD. Here is gold, friends.

SAILOR. This is the English Earl of Wessex, and can reward you.

1ST FISHERMAN (*To his Mate*). Then lash him down doubly. Speed thee, Jean, to the ground's lord Guy. This gold is ours, by right of conquest. More abundance grows to us, through our lord Guy of Ponthieu.

HAROLD. What coast is this, sirs, where men do use such manners?

1ST FISHERMAN. Ponthieu, sir; and right welcome.

HAROLD (*To* WOLFNOTH). Guy of Ponthieu is a merchant of thrift and traffic. Wessex shall buy us out, heavily yet safely. Are all recovered?

FISHERMEN. Ay, ay, sir.

Harold. Ye shall make merry on this, an ye entreat us the better.

1ST FISHERMAN. We mean thriving on it. Hale them hence.

WOLFNOTH. Alas, that we are here!

HAROLD. I am to blame, to loose thee so.

(*Exeunt* OMNES.)

SCENE III.

Westminster. A Room in Harold's House.

(*Enter* GUTHA *and* EDITH SWAN-NECK, *with some of* HAROLD'S SAILORS.)

EDITH. Follow in, Sea-birds, let us hear your cry,
If ye have voice or note.
SAILOR. To speak orderly
Of things disordered, we were cast away;
And held ourselves among the drowned already;
When certain fishers changed our hap—for profit,
As we discovered to our woe; and sold us
Unto the Count of that coast, Guy of Ponthieu.
EDITH. Guy of Ponthieu? Oh, cursed merchant-man!
GUTHA. The wealth of Solomon, to buy out my child,
If ye speak sooth. But are ye of those that fared
With my son Harold? These eyes no longer are
Ready-reckoners, and I cannot swear
That ye be so.
EDITH. I know these men, myself.

And wherefore was the purchase?
SAILOR. Wherefore but to sell again?
We, being unprofitable, poor and mean,
Not worth the warehousing, were set aboard
For England, and shipped hither. But, ere clear,
Waiting the wind and lading and the moment
Of our departure fixt, we had an inkling
Of Lord Harold's management.
EDITH. What was a-doing?
GUTHA. My dower shall drain shallow till he is free.
SAILOR. I think the Earl is not for barter now.
My noble lady, Earl Harold sent post haste,
By secret messenger, as we surmise,
Unto the Duke of Normandy who has bought
The robber's interest in our master. If so,
Still to surmise, unto Bayeux or Rouen
The Earl is in transit whence he hath lain
So vilely lodged.
EDITH. But what shall he do
To gratify this prince of traffickers,
This dealer in the bodies of great men
Whose souls cannot be bought? Hath William cheapened
For nothing?
SAILOR. I know not, but by such report

As is as like to reach you here in London,
As us at sea. But that Lord Harold's stayed
In Normandy, and, willy nilly, is there,
Is settled weather in men's mouths, I know.
EDITH. These words are gridirons whereon we lie stretched
In lingering death.
GUTHA. Death is not here, child.
Now by Saint Dunstan, daughter-in-law to be,
Thou tak'st it over hard.
EDITH. Never to be
Daughter-in-law to thee, at any hazard
Remaining now. Harold is to be crowned;
Or, if not crowned, confounded. Death is here,
Foretasted in my thought. Shall Harold, he
To whom Wales and our vassals, swearing truth
Unto the King, sware also, naming him
As demi-king and partner in the realm,
Only less than King Edward, and more strong,
Shall Harold cringe, owe ransom, freedom, life,
Unto the liberality and gift
Of an advantage-taker, to a creditor
Like to push hard conditions to the worst,
Such as we know the Norman Duke to be?
I'd rather pawn my soul unto the fiend,

Than trust Duke William with my liberty,
If he could turn it to profit.

SAILOR. Forgive us, lady, what we must say.

EDITH. Hast told the King?

SAILOR. Not yet.

EDITH. Do so at once.
King Edward is from London, being sick;
And lacks the Earl. Would ye could physic him.—
Ah, Harold, in the power of Normandy!—
Prepare to follow where the King is lodged.
I'll fee you for this news; but in such mood
As caitiff wretch feeth the hangman's pains
For putting him to death.

GUTHA. This lays a nettle on,
That blisters my old paps.

(*Enter* TOSTIG.)

Who cometh here,
Whom I must touch, as Isaac touched his son?
I feel his entrance; but I scarcely see.

EDITH. This is Tostig.

TOSTIG. Tostig I was,
Earl of Northumbria; and shall be again;
Or else Northumbria crumble to dust
Beneath my heel for it. I will grind the bones
Of the broad earldom.

GUTHA. What is toward there?
Thou knowest Harold is a prisoner?
TOSTIG. I know not nor care not.
EDITH. Thou shouldst care, Tostig. What a vial of wrath
Thou emptiest abroad. If winds be rude,
Thou shouldst be an example to the winds,
And not their humble learner.
TOSTIG. Vixen, wilt speak? The King shall avenge my loss;
Or I'll abroad, and carve out for myself
A dish for my appetite.
GUTHA. What, son, hath moved thee so?
TOSTIG. Harold's contrivance,—and his absence is
A part of it,—hath given the start to this.
EDITH. Measure and weigh thy words, Earl.
TOSTIG. Ye of my hearth and home,
Who have broken bread with me since I brake bread,
Coo at me, like young doves. All north of Humber
Hath met, forsooth, in council—bless the word!—
Deposing me,—hear ye that?—and chosen earls—
I little reck whom.
GUTHA. Tostig, Tostig, Tostig,
Behold, my Godwin gave to England peace,
Commerce and plenty! Harold is his double,

His offshoot; thou his shadow and black shade.
Thou hast in cold blood slain upon thy hearth
Ulf, son of Dolfin, and Gamel, son of Orm,
Two vessels full of life, now broached and spilt,
To head thy murders done in name of law
But in the form of crime; and, from the ground,
Yea, from the clay and marl their blood hath made,
Wetting the dust, it crieth loud for thine,
O Tostig.

TOSTIG. I rid my bed of vermin when they died.

GUTHA. Then, wolf, I will not flatter thee, my flesh.
I chide that tongue of thine, that's ever curst
At home, yet smooth as meal, being out of doors;
Unwholesome in either vein. Were Harold here,
To fold us as a flock!

TOSTIG. As for these earls
Grown rich with my despoiling, and grown fat
With my forced fasting—Alfgar's sons they are—
I'd whip them to the sea; but, by my soul,
Harold hath gript the realm so in his fist,
He leaves us headless, a beheaded trunk,
When he is away; yea, we have not a king,
Although King Edward lives, Harold's so big,
As with an aping kingship. Let him be fetched.

EDITH. He cannot come.

GUTHA. Though with as good a will
As longing father toward his dying child.
EDITH. These shipmen standing by, whom you disfurnish
Of trust by this wild raving, will make clear
So much, if thou wilt clear thine eyes to see.
SAILOR. Ay, my Lord Tostig.
TOSTIG. Then let him stay away.
We are hands and heads at home. Tell me no jot
Of why he comes not; I'd not have him by.
I seek this roof where I was babe and boy,
And it rejects me; but I have redress;
Edward, being aroused, hath danger in him.
I will embrace the aguish King, and put
Firebrands into his hands. The North's advanced
To Nottingham. This land is cut in twain;
And like two nations will we try the issue,
Till North or South be swallowed.
(*Exit.*)
EDITH. This is the sport of mice,
Their terror being away. Is there no beetle
To strike Duke William's cramp from Harold's shoulder,
And shake it off, before these mice, these rats
Gnaw through our heart of oak, and scuttle us?

Go, men, and be not fearful in your speech,
Lest fear bring what it fears.

SAILORS. Rest on us, noble lady.

(*Exeunt* SAILORS.)

GUTHA. Harold, come home, come home!

EDITH. What we cannot prevent
Let's not lament. Only let England's heart
Pray for Earl Harold.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE IV.

Bayeux. A Room in the Castle.

(*Enter* MALET *and* ULF OF DORCHESTER.)

MALET. My Lord Bishop is come to court?

ULF. I look the Duke shall atone me with the great Earl, to the regaining of my see of Dorchester. Let me snuff the wind of things at Bayeux. We all know, Guy of Ponthieu hath disgorged his ill-gotten prey, Harold, whom certain of the county fishermen found a-wash upon their beach, delivering him, on goodly ransom paid in Duke William's gold. Why so?

MALET. Moved by Harold's prayers, conveyed cunningly to Bayeux; by the enforcement of overlordship made compulsory upon Guy; and, moreover, by the Duke's close desire to keep Harold closely his own. For you know our Duke's claim upon the English crown. And, I tell you, Harold shall do his bidding, or forego daylight.

ULF. Yet my main marvel is their warring so, their making common cause, as twin brothers;

Harold lying in the chief bedchamber, and set at board next his great host.

MALET. Fine chivalry bursts the strong heart of William; he is a starred king. Yet in these same Breton wars, wherein Harold hath saved so many of our captains pulled from the freshet,—in these wars, I say, to see such men stand side by side, begets desire to set them face to face. Saint Michael, what a match, when two the world can hardly match, each victorious against a belt of foes, a very galaxy about his own fields, these two, front to front, shall be a soldier's feast.

ULF. May I have the picking of that feast, to find my lost bishopstool in it! Lanfranc and Anselm, both of Italy, shall such cloistered crooks taste preferment? Anselm is made Prior of Bec, while to Caen Lanfranc is translated.

MALET. Such, with William's good-will, shall sit in Saint Augustine's chair. And, for your bishopstool, I think it hath gone from under you. Yet present yourself anon.

(*Enter* WILLIAM, MATILDA, HAROLD, WOLFNOTH, BIGOD *and* OTHERS *attendant.*)

MATILDA. My lord and I are fourteen summers wed; Wolfnoth and our two sons are of an age,

Within a year or so. Let there be sport
Between them, our fair sojourner. Sith thou pray'st
For loan of shipping, to enforce a guest
Were little worship. But of thy visit, let
The dignity thou bearest, and my lord's,
Make fortunate and accidental use,
To scan the dreadful lapse of Edward's crown
From king to king.

HAROLD. I go out to thy meaning.

WILLIAM. Earl Harold, in Brittany, 'twas thine
To execute judgment, by my side, receiving
Panoply and weapons from my hands for it;
Which makes us nobly friends. Then, then unfold
These suitable concernments answerably
In nobleness between us.

ULF. If so you please—

WILLIAM. What is here?

ULF. Further my restitution to my see,
By means of the Lord Harold.

WILLIAM. Is this pertinent?

HAROLD. Ulf,
Thou, panic-stricken, slew'st our citizens,
When thou forsook'st thy flock. Thy brow is of brass
To claim thy bishopric, or even confess
That thou wast ever bishop.

WILLIAM (*To* ULF). Thou speakest out of tune.
I keep in Normandy no run-aways;
Nor will not favour such a man abroad.
(*To* HAROLD.) At thy request, Earl, I have dug thee up,
So to speak, from Ponthieu, charging against thee,
For my free-given gold, no further tax
Than that thou wilt faithfully state the law.
Who standeth next King Edward to be England?
HAROLD. Edgar the Atheling, Edmund Ironside's heir.
WILLIAM. Can he be chosen, yet a boy in years,
And, the cry goes, of feeble mind?
HAROLD. It is not possible.
WILLIAM. Our very welcome guest, thou art well packed,
As the archives of state, with the good mind
The King hath usward; and no marvel, he
Being consanguineous; I mean, his promise,
Sealed under heavy sanction, that myself,
Failing direct line he begets not, stand
Apparent heir of England.
HAROLD. By Saint Oswald's head and hands,
I rede thee, who am one of the electors, ask
The English for that precious, coveted,

Most honourable and most dangerous
And most exalted prize.
WILLIAM. Pledge thy large voice
Beyond retraction ours, thy hand upon 't,
To nominate me England. When I reign,
Hold thou thy golden earldom as a fief
In vassalage with homage. Draw apart;
And commune inwardly. Malet!
MALET. Dread Lord!
HAROLD (*Aside*). Stark he is;
The mould of Beowolf, of a granite grain
Cut into man. Wolfnoth!
WOLFNOTH. Yes, Harold.
WILLIAM. William Malet, all is prepared, I trow.
MALET. Most ready. There is here about the court
A spy from England.
WILLIAM. Fetch him!
(*Exit an* ATTENDANT.)
(*To* MALET.) What thinkest of our captive, privily?
HAROLD (*To* WOLFNOTH). I can be rock, as he.
WOLFNOTH (*To* HAROLD). Yet list, dear brother.
HAROLD (*To* WOLFNOTH). I can be rock.
WOLFNOTH (*To* HAROLD). Rock's hewed in chips
Brother, for all our sakes—
I heard Roger the Bigod, yestereven

To Ralf de Cronches who nodded sullenly,
Call us mackerel in the net.
HAROLD (*To* WOLFNOTH). Dragons rather!
WOLFNOTH (*To* HAROLD). Malet hath told me we are doomed.
William hath sworn it, and will sear our eyes.
Tears wash my face all white. O brother, brother—
HAROLD (*To* WOLFNOTH). Nay, nay, nay!
WILLIAM (*To* MALET). Promise danger to him.
MALET. I have warned him openly.
(*To* HAROLD.) Life, sir, hath a full flavour when thou'st sipt,
Not drained the measure. Thou'rt tall, fair, not old,
Midmost thy lustihead.
WOLFNOTH (*To* HAROLD). Hark you, hark you there!
MALET (*To* HAROLD). I do thee kindness, harping on thy fears.
WOLFNOTH (*To* HAROLD). Duke William speaks in this.
Beard lions if thou wilt, and I will say
Thou play'st with kittens; touch not yonder pard
But with a glove. Oh! but thou'rt deadly brave.
Mercy on us, beware!
MATILDA (*To* WILLIAM). The boy hath eloquent gestures.

HAROLD (*Aside*). I take too long to choose, who have no choice.

MALET (*To* HAROLD). When he besieged Alençon, the beleaguered
Hung out raw hides, to keep the palisadoes
From fire; and, pointing, cried, "Work for the Tanner!"

HAROLD (*To* MALET). Meaning, his mother was a tanner's child;
A bitter taunt that had stung cooler livers.

MALET (*To* HAROLD). He swore to pollard them with pruning-hooks.
As many as he took alive he maimed
And blinded; and the flesh cut off he flung
Into the mocking town.

WOLFNOTH (*To* HAROLD). This is our host;
We are his prisoners. For the love of God,
Have pity on thyself.

WILLIAM (*To* MATILDA). I see the Saxon shakes;
And the young boy, by sympathy of kin,
Infects him beyond reason.

(*Re-enter* ATTENDANT, *with* SPY.)

MALET. Here is the man I spake of.

WILLIAM (*To* SPY). Speak close.

WOLFNOTH (*To* HAROLD). O Harold, why shew us
the curious graves
His architects have scooped out for the living
Under his donjon, save they are reserved
For you and me?

HAROLD (*To* WOLFNOTH). Saint Dunstan! To
make England Norman, as
King Edward did whilom?

WOLFNOTH (*To* HAROLD). Swear anything, and live.

HAROLD (*To* WOLFNOTH). I dare not keep such
promise; nor will not
Break it, being made. I will not promise.

WILLIAM. I would not willingly
Keep back a thing that so imports his ears.
(*To* HAROLD.) Earl of the West Saxons—

MATILDA (*To* SPY). Sirrah, let the Earl partake.

SPY. I am an intelligencer.

HAROLD. The worse I like you.

SPY. I like you as little.

WILLIAM. Hind, to thy text.

SPY. I am from Hastings. Tostig hath drawn the udders of his cow, till she hath kicked, and overturned the pail. To wit, all north of Humber hath tossed the Earl Tostig; and chooses Edwin and Morcar to be neatherds.

HAROLD. Speak further from the farm.

SPY. Tostig's flight, and the King's fury thereon, are discussed together in all men's mouths, like pie and piecrust.

WILLIAM. Mend thy terms; or they shall tear thy tongue
Out from betwixt thy jaws. Let thyself know
Normandy's guest.

SPY. An 't please your grace, Lord Earl, King Edward sleeps nor eats, but will spoil the north vindictively; he calls them mutineers, accurst detested Danes; and lights the fire to roast them.

HAROLD. I should not be from home.

SPY. The King will not abide thy home-coming; he is hot.

HAROLD. Edward will pull his house about his ears.
My place and post are by him. Tell me, Normandy,
Thy full conditions. Consider, Duke,
For ransom, I have served thee in thy sieges.
Consider, also, how affinity
Binds firmest. Is there force in a forced bond
Sealed in the grip of need? I must be hence.
It is the basest merchandise, to trade
On the necessities of famine. Sir,
Be gentle in thy strength. Give me to wife—

Do thou, most beauteous madam, take my part—
Thy child Adela when she is marriageable;
So in alliance be we sire and son;
And either's good be unto both us twain.
WILLIAM. Thou shalt wed my child;
And cast the votes of the assembled Thanes
Unto my crowning.
HAROLD. I will wed thy child;
And whoso, whether thou be England, love
Her father and her mother.
WILLIAM. Thou shufflest here.
Without reserve, clause, or condition,
Either thou'lt yield me sovranty, enforcing
My title on thy peers, thyself their chief,
The husband of my child, great Wessex' Earl,—
Give me the fashioning of England's laws
To make her be a state for all mankind
To take the neck-ache staring up at her;
Or my reversionary realm shall fall
To ravage, till my coming, in the hands
Of infirm Edward. We have harbours deep
To lock thee in, out of the eye of day,
Where, none the wiser, thou may'st crown thy brows,
And mock the darkness with mad arrogance.

Thou blanchest; and it is a timely frost
That painteth thee so snowy.
HAROLD. Thou hast my promise, Normandy,
Before all present. Lady, I wed thy child;
And our assembled Thanes shall choose their king
To be Duke William. Give me passage forth,
And ready use of this day's favouring breeze.
The charges shall be met out of my county,
For my seafaring.
WILLIAM. Rather, at our expense.
An oath shall ratify thy words; then, Earl,
Good voyage home.
HAROLD. Wherefore an oath? And yet
My word is given, how can I hold back?
My promise plight, why should I stint to swear;
Or thou demand more than my naked word,
The badge of honour? to entail a curse
By imprecation on my failure,
But calls dishonour by dishonour's name.
I fear to break my word with so much fear,
Oaths cannot worse appal me. (*Aside.*) I am marked
For a league-breaker, but must burst this cage.
MATILDA. Thy name is *Truth.*
WILLIAM. That we will take an oath of thee,
Let us be blamed for superfluity,

Rather than thou disparaged, in our care.
Our own half-brother, Odo, Bishop of Bayeux,
Shall give thee sacrament on objurations
Convincing mortal faith. Our Duchess, stay;
For female ears have but with wedlock oaths.
Our children's children from ourselves shall claim
The royal sovranty of England's line.
We will join hands upon it. Empress mine,
Entertain Wolfnoth. (*To* HAROLD.) Pass!

(*Exeunt* WILLIAM, HAROLD, MALET, ULF *and* ATTENDANTS.)

WOLFNOTH. Dost thou know England?

MATILDA. No; but my lord did, ere he married me
And keeps good memory of England's cheer,
And royal kindness.

WOLFNOTH. Then 'tis like he knows
How I do long for home. Beseech your grace,
Wessex' compliance with the Norman, what?
Will it unhasp the springe?

MATILDA. Fluttering wings,
We loose the eagle, not the dove.

(*Enter* ROGER BIGOD.)

Roger Bigod,
Say what thou ought'st.

BIGOD. Pretty boy, I am thy caretaker.

WOLFNOTH. What dost thou mean?
MATILDA. Stay with us, play with us.
WOLFNOTH. That means I *must*.
BIGOD. Must stay.
WOLFNOTH. And may play? You look from one to other,
As if each would the other should make plain,
What neither wills to say.
MATILDA. I love thee very well;
And thou must think the Earl thy brother true.
BIGOD. Thou art his pledge, and must lie here in pawn;
Thy only danger his duplicity.
WOLFNOTH. Will he be out of durance?
BIGOD. Freely, as ere he risked
His ducking poop on the wave's treachery.
WOLFNOTH. Then, France, be thou my lodging!
MATILDA. Thy safety lies
In Harold's just dealing.
WOLFNOTH. I shall not pray for that, madam.
Rather, O Saints, give him a liar's crown;
And for our dear land, let him lose his soul
And my poor body too.
BIGOD. To the keep, little lord.
MATILDA. The boy in danger buds

And blossoms to a man. He will fade soon.

(*Exeunt* OMNES.)

(*Re-enter* HAROLD.)

HAROLD. The water-gate to England is unbarred;
The ship rides at the buoy; and I may sail;
The manner of it thus. Amid the press
And throng of William's peers, my hand was on
An ark pavilioned in cloth-of-gold
Which, when they had administered the oath
Which they proposed, they lifted. Underneath,
It was a rick of dry and sinewy Deaths
Stacked one on other; all their saints convened
From out their different shrines of Normandy;
And I had sworn by that canonised host.
I felt like one upon a battlefield,
Mid hillocks of the slain, and lakes of gore:
They were so many, and I was but one.
Are there no solvents, no emollients
To thaw the very rigour of these shackles?
I swore unweeting what I swore upon.
Yet, had I known, I must have sworn no less.
Oh, bondage so to swear, and I a slave!
Oh, fetters, fetters, manacles and gyves;
If but to break an oath were to be free

(*Exit.*)

SCENE V.

Westminster. A Room in the Palace.

(*Enter* GURTH *and* EDGIVA.)

GURTH. Our men of note, drawn hither by the rite
Of coming consecration of this church,
Are packed in Westminster. We mainly lack
Our brother Harold who, since his return
And rapid transportation from Bayeux,
Hath worn a sombre front, broods on his oath,
And is much changed.

EDGIVA. Here comes the stubborn Earl.

(*Enter* HAROLD.)

HAROLD. The last of Cedric's line, on his last couch,
Our royal Edward lingers on the confines
Of being and not being.

EDGIVA. It is a king
Of holy calm.

HAROLD. What is King Edward's calm?
A land-locked water, not a moment's grace,
But black with gusty flaws. The goaded North
Flung off our brother Tostig as an asp

Of incorrigible sting. But that my voice,
Siding against my blood, for England's health,
Bridled the royal wrath, and with the Witan
Confirmed our brother's worthy banishment,
Giving his earldom unto Morcar,
Edward had else put the whole North Country
Unto the sword. It was the other day.
But yet the approach that works impossibles
Hath wrought in Edward and our thought of him
An infinite passion of calm. As at this hour,—
So his intents hold,—he hath been set up
Where, from a window, he may make survey
Of his great building. This way is he borne.
It may not be but we disturb him now
With the last question and reply of state.
(*Enter* EDWARD *on a litter*, EDWIN, MORCAR, ALDWITH, *and* THANES *attendant.*)
Sister, approach thy lord.

EDGIVA. He knows your promptings; and makes signs he'll speak.

HAROLD. Oh, make essay to speak!

EDWARD. Art thou here, Harold?

HAROLD. Ay!

EDWARD. Which is he?

EDGIVA. The nearest thee.

EDWARD. As preface to my end, yon tabernacle
Perfect from East to West, yon reliquary,
Yon Zion's Temple, yonder minster built
To hallowing come Saint Innocents' day—Edgiva,
The cushion under me—yon house of prayer and praise
I give unto my people, and to the high
Worship of the most Holy Trinity.
EDGIVA. It stands finished.
EDWARD. Therein I charge you that ye crown our kings,
And bury them out of sight; where when I lie,
Lest there be strife and outbreak detestable,
Look all one self-same way.
EDGIVA. Shall we not glance
Toward thy most darling Tostig?
ALDWITH. Outlawed
For men killed in the peace of his own hall,
For men killed at the board. Shall we not look
On Edgar the Atheling to our king, who springs
Direct from Edmund Ironside?
EDWARD. Aldwith, no; no, Aldwith.
HAROLD. He is half-witted, and a youth in years.
Ye break the realm to atoms, with him.
ALDWITH. Each atom could be crowned.
EDGIVA. What say'th the King?

EDWARD. That over-seas there shines a virtuous prince,
My instituted heir, no worse than that
Which my virginity leaves unsupplied,
The issue of my body. This prince was
My mother's kinsman. But it cannot be
That such one is. Thou shield, thou battle-axe,
I cannot wear thee, Harold, longer.

EDGIVA. Shall we crown Harold king?
Gather thy soul up in a single word.
When the firm pulse beat in thy nervous wrist,
Thou swor'st we should do so.

EDWARD. Swear not at all,
By heaven, earth, water underneath, nor by
The implacable and awful saints that hear
Our whispered vows and answer them aloud
In hail and levin—If thou art unsworn,
Enfranchised, disentangled—but I fear
Thou sworest a sacred oath.

EDGIVA. Thou will'st he should be King?
Direct and comfort the amazed court
With the plain word.

EDWARD. Thou who hast crippled
The bardic Welsh, and bucklered England
Against the Dane that, ever hopeful, spies

Our disadvantage—said I not of old
Thou shalt reign after me? Lord, hear me shout,
Long live King———
EDGIVA. He coughs, and drowns the name.
HAROLD. Couldst thou not have finished?
ALDWITH (*To her* BROTHERS). He hath postponed,
Procrastinated and put off, until
Senility must die intestate.
EDWARD. Brother, thou art not absolved.
Now my clear vision, with a gust of air,
Drives mist of sickness back. Now have I health,
Now have I light, now eyes withal to see
The love that is 'twixt Harold and this land
Who open arms to clasp each other close.
And, ere at last I quit my body's case,
Now like a royal mother would I couple
Their fortunes holily. Art thou absolved?
HAROLD. I am absolved.
Stigand of Canterbury and the Archbishop of York
Have washed me like a soul of Purgatory
That leaves all stain behind.
EDWARD. Hadst thou sworn deep
To slay thy father, it were but repentance
To tear thy vow in twain. But, son of Godwin,
An oath in danger registered on high

Becomes a thunderbolt prepared to drop,
Oblivious of excuse and deaf to plea,
Upon the votarist who takes the favour
Of the abounding heavens, but plucketh back
The engaged due.

GURTH. What wouldst thou we should do, my royal lord?

HAROLD. He slays his father who forsakes his land.

EDWARD. O brother, let me die in peace.

HAROLD. I urge thee not, milk-white and reverend sire;
But swear to thee that I am clear absolved.

EDWARD. Blessings past understanding keep thee clean.

HAROLD. Thy benediction's mightier than mine oath;
A purge of perjury.

EDWARD. Why wilt thou pluck a curse out of my mouth?
The Norman saints whose names thou tookest in vain
Will fight against thee; and thy pregnant oath
Shall, on the day of battle, bear thee grief,
Loss, shame, remorse, and ruin, at a birth
Delivered, roaring at thee, loud as hell,

To call thee sire. Carry me in ; I faint.
Men fall as the wind falls after a storm.

EDGIVA. Oh, thou hast troubled him,
Lashed him to death ! For Tostig, his in love
Far over thee, by thee lives in exile,
Treading sharp shingle of unkindly shores ;
And Wolfnoth thou hast given to Normandy ;
And thou thyself, to crown all, art forsworn,
If thou durst crown thyself.

(*Exit with* ALDWITH, *leading* EDWARD.)

HAROLD. Go nurse thy lord, uncomfortable Queen ;
Thou art a mirror that dost shew mine eyes
The very pit of my soul, that's full of fear.
What meaneth he in this ? The self-same tongue
Blessing and cursing—

(*Re-enter* EDGIVA.)

EDGIVA. O England, England, England !
The King is dead. To all our country this
Is as a stab ; but, unto me his queen,
Worse, worse, far worse, it is my husband dead.

HAROLD. Speak to her, Gurth.

EDGIVA. At the very last,
He spake in whirlwind, breathed an earthquake forth,
And, prophesying, died.

(*Exit with* GURTH.)

HAROLD. O saintly man
Whose plea is brotherhood and holiness,
Thou wakest from the dream of life that thou
Hast dreamt so prophet-like. Thy knell be knolled.
To-morrow, in this church thou built'st, we'll shrine
Thy most miraculous body; and to-night,
Our ancient Council of all Earls and Thanes
Which are in London shall decree the crown
To whom the crown best fits. Farewell, old king.
We living press on the departing dead,
And hustle them off the scene.

(*Re-enter* GURTH.)

GURTH. The Queen bathes Edward in her tears.
Oh, let the Witan meet!

EDWIN. Mercia and Northumbria lack voice
And prescient wisdom, we met here in haste,
Without due summons and the ceremony
That fits with such affairs.

HAROLD. Delay serves foreign leisure.
Edwin is good for Mercia and Northumbria,
When Morcar speaks as well.

MORCAR. Our great Thanes are at York.

HAROLD. Cannot the sons of Alfgar speak for York?
Sirs, I intend kind tenders toward your house,

To set our rivalries in tune and frame;
Affy your sister to me; at worst, I am Earl.
On whomsoever falls the golden weight,
To-morrow shall the coronation be
At Westminster.

(*Enter* EDITH SWAN-NECK.)

EDITH. Have ye scanned the heavens?

HAROLD. I do so now. Lo, there!

EDITH. 'Tis preternatural!

EDWIN. It is as bright as day. The stars want fire.

HAROLD. Portentous spark, oh, heaven's orator,
A comet dripping blood! It sears me blind;
And is a sensible sharpness, like an arrow,
That cuts mine eyeballs.

MORCAR. How suddenly it rose.

GURTH. It did not so. Wrapt in the things of earth,
We took no note of it till now.

HAROLD. Means this less or more
Than what is told of Senlac hill?

GURTH. Nay, that is confirmed;
The air there nightly fills with dreadful groans,
With neighing horse and the appurtenance
Of very fight.

HAROLD. Omens of dying kings

Have been before, saluting monarchy
That comes and goes as they do.
GURTH. We think this portent overhead
Appoints thee king.
HAROLD. The people should appoint, and quickly too,
By acclamation or the poll, or leave me
Administ'ring Earl. Edward's executor,
In any case, I am who am not weak
To seize or, once seized, to let go this land
Whose bread-winner I am.
GURTH. King Edward named thee as intended to it;
Which is to be remembered. Good now, hurry
Before the wondering Thanes who, at the door,
Are sick with speculation. Come to the poll.
HAROLD. That cannot be my place.
Bethink thee, brother, shall I crown myself?
Can this hand bind a glory round this head?
Can I be seen to snatch what's underprized
Except free will go with it? If I be king,
Not by heredity, leave me to vaunt
My holding purely love. Brother and Earls,
Speed I would have, but not constraint to raise
Me ere another. Choose me, I am here,

Neither to shrink, to falter, nor to ebb
From that high tide of choice. I do almost
Command; but let that be in deeds of worth.
More, I have taught you how to choose, and grieve
Condemning, if ye do reject my strength.
I wait your choosing here.

GURTH. Yet, brother, hear me out.
Danger is to be feared; your speech were gold;
Therefore—(*Drawing* HAROLD *aside.*)

EDWIN (*To* MORCAR). Notest the craft, whereby he will not stand
One of the electors; as who should assume
The place of candidate and Prince of the Blood?
A crafty boldness.

MORCAR. By now he is strong enough to need boldness,
Not craft. Send that this marriage fructify;
Then, in one bottom, float we and his cause.

EDWIN. This year will be remembered, I doubt not,
By nearer matter than yon fire-stuffed star.

MORCAR. I hear of winds tied up in Normandy
Which, if they burst, save who can save himself.

HAROLD. I have heard thee. (*To* GURTH.) Earls of Mercia
And of Northumbria, I forget not words

Touching us nearly that were lately passed;
I mean my marriage with the Queen of Wales.
So much between us, and resolved upon.
Earls, ye my brothers, and my brother Thanes;
Friends, in no wise mistake my act that I
Silence my tongue, nor on that foothold stand,
That's mine in the assembly, till ye have taken
The votes in full tale.

EDWIN. Like Harold hast thou said.

MORCAR. Which praises it as noble.

GURTH. To the election, Earls;
And ours the blame if to-day's work be ill.

(*Exeunt* ALL *but* HAROLD *and* EDITH SWAN-NECK.)

EDITH. Heaven lights our pathway with yon burning torch.
Harold, the sky's alight with sparkling fire,
To glorify thee.

HAROLD. I will take the glory sent,
Although it burn me up at the touch. All's urged
That may be urged, my country's need, my honour,
The unconditional trust of the late King
Who lieth freshly dead; there's no escape.

EDITH. Wouldst thou escape?

HAROLD. From perjury, where I shall be sloughed

Up to the arm-pits. I am a man of war,
Who writes a text once, and then lets it stand.
But if I could call back the unfettered past,
Unswear the irrevocable word, or keep
My heretofore inviolate truth, I would,
And yet would not renounce duty and fame;
Yea, disappoint the realm, give a rebuff
To friends that pluck and waft me to my throne;
Waste all the years that I have spent in power,
By the foregoing of the fruit, to quiet
That whispering *I was truthful, to a fault,*
Who now am politic, shuffling ill and ill
To find the lesser evil. But, by heaven!
Shall William Normandise this soil we love?
Tax our full homesteads for his court, his hunt?
Uproot my canons, and plant monks instead?
Insult the breed of our free-born descent?
Which he will do; make virtue to be French,
English discredit, if we once give way;
As it was in the Confessor's time.

EDITH. Our only help is in thee. Thou'lt not look back.
As well might I regret, what I mourn most,
The simple comfort of thy simple love
That was between us. England loves thee, Harold,

And I am English. Then, for England's love,
I cheerfully divorce my only cheer;
And bid thee wed thy land, give her thy ring.
I'll haunt thee with no love-lorn willow bough,
No tears that thou shalt see me shed, no sigh,
No sunken cheek, no paleness.

HAROLD. Thou art brave.

EDITH. So art thou.

But courage is not reared on melancholy.
All antecedent ties, slip them as sin.
As here I lay the searing iron athwart
The memory of my brain, and do forget
Sweetness that is but memory, do thou also
Blanch out our yesterday, nor speak nor think
Of what is past recall; give it a grave,
Not an "here lyeth"; let our virgin oaths,
And thy oath to Duke William cease to be,
At the dread call of England's hour of need.
This council, as with one voice, will cry king
To thee, King Harold.

HAROLD. It will do so. To effect which,
Need was I made alliance in marriage, making
Friends of some scarcely friendly.

EDITH. It is the way, I know.

HAROLD. Thou bravest of the brave!

I am to wive in Alfgar's kindred, Edith.

EDITH. Thou wilt? Alas, poor queen, purchased and sold!

What tears, if she be woman, shall be shed
For such contracting; oh, such wooing moves
Laughter upon the scoffing lips of hell.
But strong necessity knoweth no law
Of man or god; and I commend thee, Harold,
Thou unjust steward who, loving only me,
Wilt swear thy soul away unto the queen.
Oh, bridle me, ye angels, lest my tongue
Wound where it should not; yet, O Harold, Harold,
How sweet is Love when he spreads wings to go,
And one might pluck him back. Heed not my plaint;
Seal up thine ears, and bar the passages
That lead to pity in thy manly heart.
We've thought this over, threshed it out to dust.
I will thou takest Aldwith to the church,
And makest England glad with the *I will*
That, more than all the Norman oaths which scare
The pale and fasting priesthood in the mass,
Must perjure thee, and slay my happiness.

HAROLD. Both of us must abide
The shaping of a beam that's to be used
In the master-builder's plan. Nothing is done

Where nothing's to be suffered; and great good
Follows endurance great. Part we, as we stand,
For truth's sake.

(A shout heard.)

EDITH. A shout! And in a happy hour
Thy brother and the crown.

(*Re-enter* GURTH *and* EDWIN, *with the crown*, MORCAR, *the* THANES *and* ATTENDANTS.)

GURTH. From this day forth, be England's king,
Drest in the full estate that title hath.
Fold it about thee, in the teeth of foes
Household or foreign; so the Witan dooms.
We are royal, brother, in thy royalty;
And kiss thy hand the first.

EDWIN. Northumbria next.
Grandson of Wolfnoth, son of Godwin, Harold,
Take up the reins long daily in thy hands
Vice-royally, but now in royal right
Confirmed unto thee by the people's gift.

MORCAR. Woe and destruction light upon their heads
That are not true to this day's act and deed.

OMNES. So say we all.

HAROLD (*Taking the crown*). Is it so near, at last?
With little boasting, but a stern resolve

To merit it, and to fulfil each jot
Of honest men's desire bound up and meant
In this rare yoke of tillage for the fields
That nourish all of us, I bow my neck
To receive it. Comrades, let me boldly be
Crowned in despite of yonder frowning fire.

OMNES. Long live Harold, King of the English!

(*Exeunt* OMNES.)

SCENE VI.

Rouen. A Room in the Castle.

(*Enter* WILLIAM *and* MATILDA, *their sons* ROBERT *and* WILLIAM RUFUS, ODO, BIGOD *and* OTHERS *attendant.*)

WILLIAM. Odo, a comet may mean anything
Or nothing; let it burn itself away.
'Tis inarticulate. Here's one comes fast.
Turold, my man, it is.

(*Enter* TUROLD.)

TUROLD. News, my lord Duke.
WILLIAM. From England? Speak thy news.
Is it well with Edward?
TUROLD. He is with the saints.
In Westminster Abbey he is buried.
WILLIAM. Then shall the Witenagemot
Name a new king.
TUROLD. They have done so.
WILLIAM. His name
William the Norman?
TUROLD. No; over-awed
By present force, they hallow and anoint
Harold, son of Godwin.

WILLIAM. *"Long live King Harold!"*
Cry they so?
TUROLD. God pardon truth.
King Edward, prophesying to the last,
Scarce cold in death, in four and twenty hours
The vault embraced him; and, uncivil haste,
A fault of Godwin's house, the Witan meeting
The self-same hour he died—
WILLIAM. A race for it?
TUROLD. Their choice fell
On Harold Godwinson.
WILLIAM. Upon Godwinson
Fall all the plagues of Pharaoh! Sawest thou this
Which thou recountest circumstantially,
With thine own eyes?
TUROLD. I saw the Archbishop of York,
Because that Stigand's pallium is much questioned,
Set the fair diadem where it now rests.
WILLIAM. By the splendour of God,
By the splendour of God, outrageous hell
Spits me alive, until I tumble Harold
Into the maw of devils. Throned and crowned?
Palled in dominion, slippery with the chrism?
Emblemed like majesty, an English king?
Almighty Justice,

Make me an astrologic scourge to fall
Like Noah's Deluge on this perjurer;
Like the Last Flood that, for the rainbow bars
Another watery, comes with fiery waves,
With whirlpool slaggy, foaming red as blood.
Fury and spite! I'll fling his carcase where
Twice daily pickle of the tidal brine
Shall wash off the holy oil. Are lies for sale?
God's wrath, but I will shake this rat by the throat!
Yet with fierce caution. Thousands of men,
Hundreds of ships, all France! I choke in choler!
Barons,
Fly in full armour, like black thunder-clouds
Surcharged and weaponed with the forks of doom,
Over the narrow seas. My affianced Britain
Goes from me, whereat this blood boils to burst
These hardy sides. By the most Holy Rood,
Right is within the tempest of my spleen;
And He whose own commandment names Him jealous
Needs is at one with me. Cram ships with arms;
To my false leman England will I leap;
And strangle the adulterer Harold.

RUFUS. Father, why do you rage? If I were struck, I would strike back.

WILLIAM. Young malapert!

Up on my shoulder, Rufus. Roger Bigod,
Our marshals shall convoke at Lillebonne
A hall of baronial council to define
The limits of our armament.
ODO. We will build and launch
Leviathans that, bowmen, horse and foot,
Bowl with all hands along.
MATILDA. Matilda rigs an admiral,
A great sea-serpent costless to my lord,
To bear my lord. The sternpost shall be carved
Like little Rufus, painted to the life,
A bugle horn set to his cherub lip,
He winding a long blast; so shall our love
Be lively symbolised to the following craft
That shall be cygnets to your swan o' the seas.
Heaven's flaming comet was a flag and sign
Of what we trust in promising.
ROBERT. Shall Wolfnoth die the death?
WILLIAM. The fool shall live.
But let the great God that looks down from heaven
Smite this perfidious and perjured man.
O Normans, hang on the usurper's neck
With viper kisses. Gather all my counts,
And let deliberation's self be brief.
Now is the game and play of war. My battle-cry

Is *God our help!* God help the undermost
When William hath him down! Sit firm, young Jack.
Thou tetchy Robert, mount on my other shoulder.
ROBERT. Give me a real horse.
WILLIAM. Thou shalt have one, Robert.
My lords, begin at once; we shall sit late,
Computing chances with our readiness.
Hold fast, sir. Sirs, to our places at the board.
(*Exit* WILLIAM, *carrying* RUFUS *and leading* ROBERT, *with* ODO, BIGOD, TUROLD *and* ATTENDANTS.)
MATILDA. Young knight on horseback! Mercy upon my soul,
One mortal wound, disease, or accident,
The bulk of William, like a billow, may
Sink flat, and be no more. Then, wife and child,
What will become of ye? I am alone;
Therefore I talk with terror face to face,
And blanch before my sole anxiety
That eyes the labour of this fearful time.
(*Enter* MALET *and* TOSTIG.)
MALET. Sir, you must ply your tongue here to your purpose.
TOSTIG. I am a vagabond, an outcast, lady.
Help me to thy good lord's good graces.
MATILDA. Who and what art thou?

If thou be noble, as I am sure thou art,
And most ignobly treated, as thou seem'st,
Here is a drink to quench thy discontent
Now mixing; and a place for goodly swords
That have no scabbards. Such a blade art thou,
If thou be outcast and a vagabond.

TOSTIG. Duchess Matilda, I am the Wolfnothingar,
Tostig Godwinson; and my wife I wooed
In Flanders, Baldwin's sister.

MATILDA. I am not ignorant of thy outlawry,
Tostig Godwinson; uncle I must call thee.

TOSTIG. Fair niece, I have spent time in Norway.
And a twin-born disaster on my brother
Who hath unbrothered me, yon comet threats,
That, comet or no comet, may be hatched
From Normandy and Norway. Give me speech
With great Duke William; and, advantaged so,
Advised of the counsel of the time,
To Harold Hardrada will I hasten back.
For, England like a fair doe at our feet,
Norway and Normandy may part the prey,
Or either, for the whole, strike other down;
Or, with a secret seal on pre-drawn terms,
With England quelled as the foundation stone,
Divide the broad field of the sunny world,

And reign at Paris and at Novgorod,
Or at Byzantium and Eternal Rome,
In poised empery, if the ambition
Live in them to be potentates. Fairest niece,
Pardon me if my tongue outruns the hour
And minutes of the day. Only vouchsafe
To countenance with thy beauty my approach;
And let thy silver rhetoric be the charm
Singing Duke William in a toward mood,
To entertain my story.

MATILDA. I shall not need;
For Tostig hath a tongue of golden note
Touching harmonics. Flatter the great duke,
As thou hast flattered me; which should be done
By harping on his greatness to be won.

(*Re-enter* ROBERT *and* RUFUS.)

ROBERT *and* RUFUS. Madam!

TOSTIG. What dimpled boys are these?

MATILDA. If thou wouldst lay siege to my husband's love,
Be kind and courteous to these dimpled boys;
They are his only dotage.

TOSTIG (*To* RUFUS). Wilt thou bespeak me welcome?

(*Exeunt* OMNES.)

SCENE VII.

Westminster. A Room in the Palace.

(*Enter* HAROLD, ALDWITH *and* MORCAR.)

HAROLD. By this my instant marriage with your sister,
The house of Godwin and the house of Alfgar,
Rivals so long, are knit in amity
And league. But, lady, I must seem too rude;
Since, with my brother Tostig, I harrowed
Thy former husband, Griffith, King of Wales.

ALDWITH. Shall I confess? That husband seemed too rude;
And when ye charged him up the rocks that bred
Him and his Welshmen, all the prayers that should
Have gone up for him went up for his foe,
I called my rescuer. His own savage slaves
Traitorously slew him in the flight, where see
What folk they were that I was wed among.
What is it to be lord among the vermin,
A king of stoats, polecats, and depredators?
Thou art a king of men, and where men are

There woman's love should go, as mine toward thee.
But if I blot out my prime husband's love,
Make thou as clean a tablet for my name.

MORCAR. They who would thrive must practice to forgive
And to forget, sister. A bride should keep
Not memory, but hope. Not what is spent,
But what's to spend is thine. Let wise wives learn
A man's youth is not to be known.

ALDWITH. An answer to a woman! Slanderers
Have breathed on Edith Swan-neck.

HAROLD. Slanders and slanderers!

ALDWITH. Slanders and slanderers let them remain;
If they have root, give them no nourishment.
We'll wink at whence they sprung, so they die now.
Repose thyself while good repute in thee
Gives me untroubled sleep, not an hour longer.
I would betray my lord's deceit to death,
Cruel unto the cruel, kind to the kind.
But thou'lt not tempt me.

HAROLD. Thou'rt open like a book that all may read;
And I hate not thy meaning. I embrace
Thee with all pains and penalties pronounced,
Which are an earnest of good faith, no worse,
And therefore nothing beyond honourable,

As I would still remain. I ask nought better
Than that thou and all men be even with me.
ALDWITH. As I am served, so will I serve again;
Remembering when my lord hath memories.
MORCAR. Chiefly remember, king and queen,
All the north country, by this wedlock won,
Is yours against the Norman's levied power
That, as I think, is largely bought with gold
In France, in Brittany and I know not where.
ALDWITH. William hath challenged us in solemn state.
HAROLD. And I have solemnly dismissed his man;
Yet so environed with a guard, as blind
To spy upon the nakedness of our bosom.
For, I must own, we are unreadiest
To meet invasion. I have kept and manned
A goodly fleet these many months, now loosed
And scattered to the fisheries. What help?
Save that Duke William hath as hard ado
To feed embodied powers, being as I hear
Strict against plunder.

(*Enter* EDWIN.)

Thy hand, Earl Edwin,
And with thy hand, thy news.
EDWIN. They speak of Tostig;
Knowest thou his dwelling-place?

HAROLD. In the North Sea.
I know by espial he hath sailed so far.
EDWIN. And farther. He hath joined him to the King
Harold Hardrada of the Norse.
HAROLD. That is a hard saying.
Is this the sum, or the preliminary?
EDWIN. With herded forces and a flock of sail
That do comprise princes of Ireland,
The King of Scots, with the two Earls of Orkney
And chiefs of Iceland, they encamp and lodge
Within our earldom's bounds, upon the Derwent.
The man, half dead with speed, that brought me word
Is here to swear to it, and is one of trust.
York's taken, and all is lost.
HAROLD. If all be lost,
Put a good face on it. But all's not lost
Unless we lose ourselves.
EDWIN. There's comfort yet,
After a country fashion, in the dreams
That, as we learn by rumour and by scouts,
Have filled the Norse King's nights with sleeplessness;
As carrion kites and hideous hags which ride
Wild mares, and chatter to his closed eyes.
HAROLD. That were as good as nought. But to our
flock.

My house-carles and a fight are man and wife;
And a small company with a large heart
Can overtake hundreds of miles, before
The Norseman can recover from carouse
After his taking York. My only care,
And it is heavy, is that north and south,
At once, I cannot be. Let the wind hold
That sped Hardrada, to keep William back.
Farewell.

ALDWITH. No, I will with you, and put heart
Into our yielding people.

HAROLD. Up, and away.
A buffet on both cheeks is cruel play.
Judgment of lies is come at last. (*Aside.*)

(*Exeunt* OMNES.)

SCENE VIII.

Rouen. A Room in the Castle.

(*Enter* WILLIAM *and* BIGOD.)

WILLIAM. Bigod, I see thee green and full of sap;
Methinks I see thee, Roger the Bigod,
Four-square, and like a castle stuffed with wealth.
BIGOD. My mouth waters for it.
I am an otter-hound, and a keen one.
WILLIAM. Thou shalt be fed,
After the chase.
BIGOD. Lay me on.
WILLIAM. His Holiness of Rome
Makes movement toward me by his Nuncio.
(*Enter* NUNCIO *and* MALET.)
MALET. Enter, father.
NUNCIO. William, our child in God.
WILLIAM. I am no hypocrite to blazon forth
How well I love the church. It likes me ill
The Primate of all England is a man
Irregularly inducted. I built Bec,
And love the life monastic when it lives

After its meaning. Oh, let Hildebrand,
And those about the Holy Father, smile
Upon my conquest as on a crusade.

NUNCIO. The Holy Father greets you herewithal;
A precious hair of the Apostle Peter
Who conquered Rome for Christianity,
Shut in a crystal; and, by my same hands,
He sendeth you a gonfalon he hath blest.

WILLIAM. Enrich me with them, father, in the church;
That all my liegemen, seeing, know the Pope
Hath voice and suffrage, on a vacant throne,
To its disposing.

(*Exit* NUNCIO.)

Malet, thou art half English;
How dost affect thy mother's land?

MALET. I affect thy service.

WILLIAM. Call in the Jews, to the Exchequer table;
And I will meet them, William Malet, there.

(*Exit* MALET.)

Those armours put to making, tell the smiths
I hold the moneys for them in my hand.
And see the mercenaries on their pay.

(*Exit* BIGOD.)

Fearful of charge and of exertion,
The Council was adverse; but, one by one,

Buying the counts with divers practised lures—
Adventure, turbulence, ambition, greed,
Vanity, folly, nobleness and debt,
And crime that vainly hopes to thrive by me—
With baited hooks, gins laid and hidden snares,
I have entrapt all inclinations,
The current of men's wishes and their bias,
To my attempt. Now the old King of France
Is dead, and his successor, in his nonage,
Is as a ward unto my father-in-law,
Baldwin of Flanders; now my capital foes,
Late Counts of Anjou and of Aquitaine,
In sundry churches sleep. My navy is blown
From the mouth of the Dive, east to Saint Valery,
Wherefrom the crossing is much easier,
And rides in gallant trim.

(*Enter* ANSELM.)

Most gentle Anselm!

ANSELM. Stern, thou hast still been gentle unto me;
And well I love thee, William, and thy good.
Make me believe—for I am come from Bec
To catechise thee—thou art still honest.

WILLIAM. To thee I'll justify
Honesty, Anselm. My argument is clear,
At Rome, by Abbot Lanfranc's lips.

ANSELM. But sure, the Holy See,
Betwixt two Christian princes, will stay war,
Not bid it speed.
WILLIAM. Relics and a banner
Are sent to me. We have to deal in war,
Petty or grand; and better I should dock
The upstart heads, than that each puny farm,
Each little burgh, each castle should presume
On private ravage, to expire before
The latest viking. I shall seem vainglorious
To speak of mine intent; yet to be dumb
I wrong myself, and lose thy charity
Toward what I dearly hope. For I profess,
By the great God of all, and under Him
The proved event shall show thee, how that law
Shall become awful—yea, and force itself
Forget its terrors, being the watch-dog
And homely drudge of man.
ANSELM. You shall better tame
Violence with patience than with violence;
By kindly patience, than by ringing blows.
How bare our Corner-Stone the sword and shield,
Against the wrongful times? 'Twas by His tongue,
And His ensample of a perfect life;
Saying to Peter, "*They who take the sword*

Shall perish by the sword." Hear me, awhile.

WILLIAM. School me, dear Anselm; men do well to think
Highly of their own labour; but, as well,
To scorn no other man's. In England
I will not brook, be sure, their quarrelsome earls
To ride rough-shod, as their wont is.

ANSELM. I was the other day
Urged, that my scholars in the schools must be,
Corrected by the rod.

WILLIAM. Why, so they must.

ANSELM. I asked my interrogator
How his young scholars ripened. "*They become*
But the more brutish," quoth my pedagogue.
Quoth I, "*Learn thou a way, as I have learned,*
Whereby they wax less brutish; brutal seed
Springeth to brutal fruit. Win them to learn;
Make them in love with learning."

WILLIAM. I cannot answer you,
To vex ourselves with words. But I instruct
No willing scholars. Every man o' my realm,
As I shall draw a schedule of their souls
And of their holdings, shall swear fealty,
Above his duty to his landed chief,
Straight to myself; that all retainers shall

Be rebels, following a baron's head
Against that baron's king. And no great fiefs
Compact and capable of good defence,
But scattered shires and parcels of estate
Shall be the fields to grow my followers
For me, not for themselves. Can you not dream,
Most holy Anselm, this shall banish war
To the off side of our bulwarks, when all's perfect,
Putting a period to invaders' hopes;
That none may emulate the thing I do
In boarding Britain?
I speak too much of things I wish were done;
Which is immodest.

ANSELM. I hope and trust all things.
The blessing of God Almighty, if thou art true,
Be on thee; if not, turn to me again.
Thou hast my prayers.

WILLIAM. Who asks a surer blessing merits none.
Thou spak'st, Anselm, of boys; by any power,
Would thou could'st lay the devil in my sons.
There is too much of their father in them; I have fed
Their pampered humours to excess.

ANSELM. God send they are ore
Whose crushing will yield gold!

(*Exit.*)

(*Enter* TUROLD.)

WILLIAM. What speed? Our challenge,
How is it taken? Mockingly?

TUROLD. Haughtily, at least;
No answer deigned; but I, guarded and watched,
Sent to the coast. In spite of which, I glean
He's struck i' the north; though whether by the Dane,
Irish or Scot, learn not. Yorkshire's in throes
Of an astounding battle, certainly;
And Harold hastes to the deliverance,
Leaving the south to Providence.

WILLIAM. We have had ear and eye on this.

TUROLD. One thing besides, Duke William;
With Harold, sat a Queen upon the throne,
And gave me audience.

WILLIAM. The Queen-mother, perhaps;
Gutha, that bare him.

TUROLD. As I hope to thrive,
When I reminded him he was affianced
To wed the daughter of my famous lord,
She rose one hurricano, and she was
Aldwith the child of Alfgar.

WILLIAM. Give me the sea
For four and twenty hours! Albion
My bride's abducted, and she shall conceive

A progeny to Alfgar, a grandchild
To Godwin. Said she not, for I think so,
The daughter of a bastard was no queen
To reign with Harold?

TUROLD. Dread my lord Duke,
Bid me not heat a seven-times-heated furnace,
For fear it lick me up.

WILLIAM. By Rolf the Ganger
My ancestor, those were her very words;
And Harold's thoughts were like them.

(*Exit.*)

TUROLD. Nothing more sweet.

(*Enter* VITAL.)

What haste, Sir Vital?

VITAL. The wind is changed; afloat, and man the fleet!

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE IX.

York. In Hall. A Banquet set.

(*Enter* HAROLD *and* ALDWITH *who take their state;* GURTH, EDWIN, MORCAR, THANES *and* ATTENDANTS.)

GURTH. Locked safe in York, strife overborn by strife
To battered peace, in hall we are met together.
Now let the roof echo to victory,
Up to the king-posts.
EDWIN. Drain dry the bull's horns.
MORCAR. Hang arms and armour up.
HAROLD. Aldwith, my wedded bride, these goodly earls
Thy brothers fought to-day.
ALDWITH. Ay, they struck home.
Ye took the Norseman nodding.
HAROLD. Almost as he marched out of York,
We entered in; and close at Stamford Bridge,
He being half across, we struck the rear
With bloody onslaught, which, quite unprepared,

Was cut to pieces. But at the bridge-head
A man—all that they tell of Berserkers
I will believe—jump in the strait and gap
And narrow of the gangway, stopped us dead,
While on the far bank his compatriots formed
Their grim battalion. In which check and pause—
Our army snaffled, pulled upon the haunches—
They called a parley; whereon Tostig, coming
Upon the bridge, called out full brotherly,
So that I loved him over again, "*What peace?*
What portion have I, making friends?"

ALDWITH. None at all.

HAROLD. Oh, but with brimming eyes I cried, "*Thine earldom,*
With all thereto pertaining." Then I swore
Edwin and Morcar might go sit i' the cold
And bite their nails for hunger, but his earldom
Was his for ever.

ALDWITH. False to comradeship!
Thou lovest me less than nothing.

HAROLD. My blood was up;
He was my mother's child; and on the Welsh,
Where he struck for me—whatsoever since—
He proved my brother.

ALDWITH. Would ye had never quelled

My noble Griffith. Are our marriage bonds
Forged of this metal?

HAROLD. I am a fool.

ALDWITH. Thou art!

HAROLD. But hear the end. Tostig, beckoning with his hand,
Began a pleasantry: "*What English soil*
Will Harold give to Harold, to Hardrada
Who does me right?"

ALDWITH. What was thy generous answer?

HAROLD. Six foot of English ground;
Or, since he is a giant, something added
As needs to bury him, not an inch more.
And then the battle woke anew, refreshed
By so much slumber. A spearsman, in a skiff—
Oh, that advantage valour must subdue,
And we applaud it!—with the stream dropt down,
Launching his weapon 'twixt the planks o' the bridge,
Under the hauberk, pierced the veteran
That, single to our numbers, stood our match
Disputing there, and slew him.

GURTH. We forced the bridge.
I wished Duke William could see Harold then
Fighting in earnest, that he should go sweat
For very fear and dread.

HAROLD. What needs to tell
The intermediatory acts, before
The final consequence? When all was fought,
Hardrada threw away his shield, and sold
His life for scores of ours, for hundreds.
I found my brother, his face downwards thus,
Kissing his earldom in a last embrace,
And stiff already.

ALDWITH. You are melancholy.

HAROLD. Mead and their victory make these men mad
And merry as a fair. They scarcely wash
The sweat and blood away. In Godwin's name,
I love them heartily; they are the breed
For such a holiday! Skole!

ALL. Skole!

GURTH. There is a ballad made already
Upon our fight at Stamford Bridge.

HAROLD. We will hear it sung.

(*Enter a* THANE.)

THANE. King Harold,
How many men here hast thou fit to march?

HAROLD. Not very many. Art thou from the south?

THANE. I am from Sussex. I have ridden somewhat.
William the Norman——

HAROLD. On a change of wind?

THANE. Accursed change!
HAROLD. He is landed then?
THANE. At Pevensey.
The Duke's ship leading, of a starry night,
A mighty lantern at his mast-head swung,
He bore across the straits, most like a swarm
Of locusts, or a pack of lusty hounds
Taking the water when the hart is viewed,
And they are in full cry.
HAROLD. I dare be sworn to it. Gurth!
Gurth, take our house-carles, draw what head thou canst;
Strain friendship and the purse. We'll rouse the West.
Edwin and Morcar, hurry down in force.
The roads and tryst we shall make clear, ere day,
Which must, at latest, see us on our way.
Come to an inner chamber.
(*Exeunt* HAROLD, GURTH, EDWIN *and the* THANE.)
ALDWITH (*To* MORCAR). Our men are drunken deep.
The offer made to Tostig, think on that;
Alfgar deserted to content the foe,
If in commodity lie our downfall.
MORCAR. And whence is Harold?
Harold was less than we are; his grandsire
Herded rother-beasts.
ALDWITH. Why is Harold grown so,

Mounting on men whose earldoms once were thrones
Absolute from our neighbours, he but earl?
Pause, pause; and serve our own, not his renown.
Husband and foeman strike each other down.
Our earldom yet may wear her ancient crown.
Harold is false to me with Edith Swan-neck.
Not so hastily.

MORCAR. Whatever said, we will not march.

ALDWITH. Then be we closeted with my Lord, anon.

(*Exeunt* ALDWITH *and* MORCAR, *together; the rest dispersedly.*)

SCENE X.

Senlac Hill. The English Camp.

(HAROLD *in his tent.* *Enter* EDITH SWAN-NECK *unnoted.*)

EDITH. O King of the English in thy Sussex tent,
Pray, Harold. I have dared the track of the march
Even unto Senlac Hill. One word, one word,
Oh, for a word; oh, for a smile, a tear!
But now the cap of darkness must make me
Invisible in the camp, lest I unman
Him whom I would confirm. The priests of Waltham,
And aged Gutha whose decline is stretched
In hopes of a good ending of to-morrow,
Are hereabouts. Their company I seek,
To scan the battle. Blows, not lips, must speak.
(*Exit.*)

HAROLD. Victory brings a new fight in her lap,
Ere scarce the dead are cold. So much the better,
That we shall stir before our wounds are stiff.
Our camp sleeps well. But, in my sleep, the dreams

Harold Hardrada dreamt are fled to me.
False to Edith Swan-Neck, false to my spouse,
False to my oath, yet am I England's king.
Edith, thou ghost of my dead honesty!
O Wolfnoth, Wolfnoth, pretty sprite, depart
Out of my musings; could I save thy life?
(*Enter* GURTH.)
Are tidings brought of the dissembling earls,
The brothers of my Queen?

GURTH. I can discover neither,
By our intelligence, whether they are marched,
Or what they do intend.

HAROLD. I have covered England's leagues
In these few days since Stamford Bridge; the earls
Could march as well, if willing. This is Senlac.

GURTH. Yonder lies William, upon Telham Hill.
And all the country-side gives witness sad
And lamentable of his harryings
That draw us quickly south, while half unbraced.

HAROLD. I'll fear not that; but fear lest my army be
Tainted by my falsehood!

GURTH. Harold, hear my counsel.
I am unsworn; the cleaving plague that spots
Thy lofty spirit grapples not on me.
Fall back on London town; and gather there

A second strength; while I assay the field,
With these unperjured and unconquered men.
And I will win the battle to thy hand;
Or if I fall, we lose not our chief hope,
That liveth on in thee.

HAROLD. No, no!

GURTH. Hear me, I say.
Thou, as thou fallest back, lay the land waste
With fire and sword, drive off the flocks and herds,
That the victorious Norman, be he so,
Win but starvation, and shall contend
With want of nature's aliments, whereby
The strongest nerve wears through.

HAROLD. Thou dost forget thyself and me.
Shall England's king abhor a dangerous day;
Yielding his brother that pre-eminence;
Instructing men to fly? Less policy
Than cowardice were here. And, upon that,
Rip up the land that bare me, giving her,
Where I am set up in defence and guard,
To spoilation? Men have killed their wives
To shield them from dishonour, and have fallen
Incontinent thereafter on their swords,
So ending bitter life; and such a deed
Craves such completion; it were to be held

That I should slay myself, and cleanse the earth
Of curse, of doom, of perjury, with my blood;
And so, I think, I shall.

GURTH. Courage is hope.

HAROLD. And hope oft courage; what, man, shall I forget that?
Gurth, England's danger cleans my conscience
Of venal specks. We will have words to speak
That augur lustily. I am not removed
Nor differenced from the plain man in the ranks,
And I dare look to-morrow in the face,
No clogging doubts to foil me. Let me view
The bold, brave faces of my fellow men;
'Tis meat and drink to me; and they may feast
As fatly on my favour.

(*Enter* TAILEFER.)

TAILEFER. Hail, Harold, Earl of Wessex.

GURTH. Unmannered coxcomb, peace;
Or we will make thy peace.

HAROLD. We'll hear his story out.

TAILEFER. I am the minstrel Tailefer.

HAROLD. Sing wisely, then. Twice hath Duke William
Summoned me to surrender. The last time
At London, by the mouth of Hugh Margot,

A monk I had slain but for thy staying, Gurth;
Who cried to me to come down from my throne,
Refer my cause unto the Lateran,
And to abide trial at law betwixt
Yon claimant and myself. Refer my cause?
And to the Lateran? What are his pleas?
Edward's bequest a later will annuls,
And leaves the land to me. My plighted word?
Under compulsion, 'tis of none effect.
Yet my assured friendship and large bribes,
Ere the land bled, I freely offered him.
The monk of Fécamp cursed me as I sat;
Me for my sins, and all the land for me.
And I must needs admit my backsliding;
Yet needs deny its guilt which I retort
On Norman stratagems.

TAILEFER. For the last time, William, King presumptive
Of Britain, fearing for his subjects' lives,
Makes his appeal to spare our common country
Where thou art an earl, he would-be-should-be king.
He is appellant that thou do tie up
Thy cause, and bear it in thy proper hand,
And he the like. Briefly, he offers thee

Meeting in single combat, to determine,
Between the hosts, the issues that depend
Betwixt ye twain, all staked on the event;
No other blood to flow.

HAROLD. If he slay me?

TAILEFER. The people to accept him to their king.

HAROLD. How if my sword slay him?

TAILEFER. His bands depart your shore,
In every quietness.

HAROLD. It is very apt.
Methinks he mocks me, judging that my mind,
My honesty and soldiership alike
Do crack. It were dishonest that a king
Anointed, with the crown and dignity
Of all his land, unto the jewelled orb
Annexed, should fling away, as if a toy
Won at his dice, and stake, upon the chance
Of his sole aim, that sway and confidence
The sceptre hath. Say, they who gave the crown
Alone can lose the crown. Let him contend,
Single, or with ten thousand by his side,
With the whole body of our Englishmen;
And win the crown from them. Speak nothing more;

Nor come again in parley; or forfeit
Safe conduct on it.

TAILEFER. I am glad you have not balked
My fight to-morrow.

(*Exit.*)

HAROLD. I speak bold; 'tis best.
Fearless I am, albeit desperate.
Stamford hath scattered, not inspired my strength
That, openly, meets not the Norman horse;
And I will fight defensive, till sundown
Bring up the Alfgarson power.

(*Enter* TWO CANONS.)

GURTH. Here are two Canons
From thy foundation at Waltham Cross,
To pray with thee.

HAROLD. Ye are very, very welcome.
As I prayed in your church upon the way,
I apprehended the great Christ on rood
Bowed over me, and yielded up the ghost
Again in show, murmuring "*It is finished.*"
Yet heard I not the words.

CANON. God is the God of Battles.

HAROLD. Edith Swan-neck — Gurth, if I do fall,
Deal tenderly with her. Look forth again;

Scour the northern roads. No help, no aid?
Put never trust in man. This crested hill
Frowns over marsh, and William must attack.
Holy Cross be my stead, to thrust him back!
I am not raw in arms.

(*Exeunt* OMNES.)

SCENE XI.

Telham Hill.

(*Enter* BIGOD *and* MALET.)

BIGOD. Putting his harness on, the hauberk proved
Hind part before; whereat Duke William
Turned it round, fore and aft, saying "*A Duke,*
I turn into a King!"

MALET. As he leapt ashore
Out of the *Mora*, his good ship, he fell
Along the sand, and rising, with both hands
Full of it, cried, "*Thus take I seizen*
Upon the soil." He turns all hinting fears
To new-rejoicing hopes.

BIGOD. 'Tis a royal soldier.
He cows his enemy ere strikes a blow.

MALET. We have a friend yclept *disunion*,
A true false friend to England; for our main
Danger and dread is lest Northumbria,
Before the shut of eve—wherefore we have
Hastings entrenched—should march to his support.

(*Enter* TAILEFER.)

BIGOD. What, Tailefer!
A heavy day is before us, which will be
Forgotten only by the men that die.

TAILEFER. Attack, attack! The English set themselves
Thick as the trees within a lordly wood,
Within their wall of bucklers; and their flags,
Like to great leaves all dancing over them,
Flap in the buoyant air. William is up,
Harold defiant, parley broken off.
By Saint Owen of Rouen, I will head
To-day's death-roll and onslaught, who am named
Cleaver of Iron, Tailefer.

(*Enter* WILLIAM, ODO *and* FORCES.)

WILLIAM. This quagmire will deceive our knights; therefore
A thousand foot shall first essay the ground,
And find a bottom firm.

TAILEFER. A boon, a boon, a boon!
Grant me, like a bell-wether of the flock,
To go before your battle-array, and strike
The first blow struck. Let me throw up my sword,
As if a cap, and catch it by the hilt,
Singing the Song of Roland as I march.

An thou lovest my singing, Norman, grant it.
WILLIAM. Take thy good boon, good bard.
Give them a Roland for their Oliver,
Thou gentle Tailefer.
(*Exit* TAILEFER.)
ODO. Lo, there!
WILLIAM. And there, again!
Now for the lucky third.
ODO. And so an end
Of songster and of song.
WILLIAM. My archers, to the front!
Archers, draw the grey goose wing to the ear;
And shoot.
(*Exeunt* ARCHERS.)
ODO. Our arrows chant a dirge.
WILLIAM. Now that
The glebe is harrowed, ye our heavy foot,
Break down the ring and breastwork of his shields,
His rampart and his wall, stub up his fence.
Prepare to charge. Advance, my merry men. Charge!
(*Exeunt* SOME FORCE.)
Ye, our right hand and left, go round about,
Taking our hirelings marshalled on our wings;
Creep up, and push the half-armed rabblement
That keeps him left and right; yet bear in mind

This is a race that, with the empty hand,
Breaks wrestlers' ribs. Touse them the better for it;
Lest they touse you. Swing forward, as one man.
(*Exeunt* ODO, *with* MERCENARIES.)
His hedge of spears yet holds, but creaks and sways
And bends beneath the tempest of our tugs.
Recall our footmen! England, like a chain,
Uncouples link from link. Back! and to horse!
The dearest joy of all regenerate men.
I am your van. To horse! and, with the weight
Of onslaught and determination,
Ride them down, into mud.
(*Exeunt* OMNES.)
ENGLISH (*Within*). Out, out! God Almighty!
(*Re-enter* HIRELINGS, *flying.*)
HIRELINGS. To the ships! To the ships!
(*Re-enter* ODO.)
ODO. Brittany, Picardy, Gascoigny, and France
Undone in dastardy! Are ye outfaced
By these curs' barking? Back, upon the foe!
The devil's in your heels! Oh, scarlet shame;
Eustace of Boulogne counsels Duke William
To take to flight; I heard him counsel it.
Valour is at the last gasp everywhere.
My heart turns sick with rage. Back on the foe!

(*Re-enter* FORCES, *in flight, crying,* "*The Duke is down!*" "*Slain, slain!*" "*Duke William is dead!*" "*Fly, fly, fly, fly, fly!*")

(*Re-enter* WILLIAM.)

WILLIAM. Stand! I am sound; without a scratch o' the skin.
Mount me on horseback. Let me mount, and I
Will ride bare-head among these recreant fools;
And show them that I am alive and well.

(*A cry within,* "*Fly, fly, fly!*" *and the* ENGLISH *shouting* "*Holy Cross!*")

What traitor raised that cry? Stand! Turn again;
And blush like chidden girls.

(*Exeunt* OMNES, *the* FRENCH *crying* "*Long live Duke William!*" "*To the charge!*")

SCENE XII.

Senlac. A Place near the Field of Battle.

(*Alarums. Enter* EDITH SWAN-NECK, *meeting the* CANONS *of* WALTHAM *with* GUTHA.)

EDITH. Who and what are ye?
CANON. Brethren of Waltham, who in prayer
Wrestle our hardest.
EDITH. I am come, like a shadow,
Upon the steps of Harold. Have ye seen
The fight from the beginning?
CANON. From the beginning until now.
EDITH. See where it rages.
CANON. A madman, a mad minstrel
Struck the first blow, and slew two, ere he fell
Beneath an English axe.
EDITH. Ye are mad as he,
Not to be madder. Hark! The clang of steel!
Woodmen are in the woods; I hear their strokes.
Hold me up. Now I see Senlac Hill
And both the hosts like ocean glistering blue,

Ridgy with flashing arms.
GUTHA. Harold! Tell me of him;
My son, my son, Harold, my boy. I crawl
Hither, if it must be, to end my days.
EDITH. Who should be here, but I?
GUTHA. I am his mother.
EDITH. I know you well; but cannot think of that.
GUTHA. My eyesight fails for age. Look forth, look forth,
Edith Swan-neck. How stands the battle?
EDITH. Rank upon rank,
Rank upon rank, the horsemen charge again.
The hill is full of men, alive with men;
They rise like a bad conscience on sin,
Duke William in the fore-front.
GUTHA. And King Harold where?
EDITH. Harold,
Between two standards, the great Dragon of Wessex,
And his broad ensign of an Armed Man,
Stands like an oak tree. Through the pale of spears,
The Norman threatens him upon his horse.
GUTHA. Oh, vain accursed Norman!
EDITH. Well done, Gurth!
Thou fling'st a javelin, and his horse is dead
Among the dead, and he among the dead.

GUTHA. William is down?
EDITH. His host, like an unmastered steed, stands still;
And like a widow, hangs above its lord,
As if it wept. He springs to his feet.
GUTHA. No, he is down;
And thou dost torture my infirmity.
EDITH. William's among the very points and spikes
Of all the English spears. He's through; and fronts
The House of Godwin.
GUTHA. Why startest?
EDITH. Gurth is brained by his mace,
And falls a heap of steel; and Leofwin's brained
By the back-stroke. Bind my hands down, for fear,
If I see Harold slain,
Lest I do violence upon my life.
GUTHA. Look forth, look forth, look forth!
EDITH. Lances are knapt in twain.
Axe-heads and human heads do dance and skip
Under the Norman swords.
GUTHA. The wall of shields holds out?
EDITH. William is flung back by the torrent and
The bulk of numbers. He is like a swimmer
Contending in a sea, now on the shore,
And now drawn back into the guttered waters,

Baffling and baffled. Axe, lance and sword;
The storm is at its height; and climbs on high,
By every minute more. He is addressed
To burst the shield-ring as a door and gate
Shut fast before our banners.

GUTHA. What is the change?

EDITH. Now he gives ground; and, with a hasty word
Speaking his captains, by a stone-cast off,
Hangs all aloof.

CANON. I see a cloud of dust
Steam in the air.

EDITH. As if a battering ram
Should swing away, to fall more heavily;
So the recoil and respite is. Again,
He thunders and he surges and he storms
Around the iron-bound coast. Our shields, our shields
Are hidden as in foam; but all in vain;
For all as quickly as their spring-tide rose,
With a back-wash and drinking of a wave,
The Norman and the Normans draw away
And shrink into a very pit of doom,
Down the hill-side. Look, upon either wing
Breton and Frenchman, from our javelin-men,
Scatter pell-mell. William's third horse to-day
Dies under him.

ENGLISH (*Within*). Harold, and Holy Cross! Out! Out!

EDITH. Our English, like a headland
The sea hath scarped and sapt, rumble downhill
Upon the foeman's heels.

GUTHA. Glory to God in the Highest!

EDITH. Hot fools;
'Tis too good to be true. Now I see Harold
Stand like a hunter with a broken leash
Slack in his idle hand, and all his hounds
Gone from him ere the time. The Norman turns
And butchers them while they, full speed, retrace
The ground they trod so eagerly, to gain
The empty hill-top. Lock, oh, lock your shields!
Too late, too late; the enemy takes post
Within the guarded ring. I saw Duke William
Cast a man off a horse, and mount amain.

GUTHA. Seest thou Harold?

EDITH. He stands waist-deep among the dead, and scarce
Can move, they lie so thick.

GUTHA. Oh, heavens!
I ask no more what means that sound of wind,
Which blows again.

EDITH. Oh, let me cram my fingers in my ears,

To shut the ugly screaming of the shafts
Out of my hearing.

CANON. They shoot sky-high! The arrows fall from heaven
Upon the packed and crowded men-at-arms.

EDITH. A score of horsemen dash upon the flags.
Seven are down! Seven more! O God, O God,
Another flight of arrows!

CANON. All is over.
Six horse, four horse ride down the wounded King
Who hath an arrow through his eye, and dies
Under the hoofs. For safety, hence!

EDITH. Not I!

CANON. For life and all.

EDITH. Not I, believe me.

CANON. What wilt thou do? All that our sanctity
Can, shall be done to shield thee; but conceive
The danger of this place; a host broke loose
And scattered to the winds; pursuit and flight
And lawlessness, where every will is law
To his own evil.

GUTHA. Edith, I am so blind I must be led.
What shall become of us?

EDITH. I know not.
But every woman now must seek her own.

And I must draw King Harold from the heaps
Of common carnage. And, O fathers, ye
Shall do the rites. For we shall carry him
By bye-ways unto Waltham Cross. For Senlac,
To seek a bridegroom dead among the dead!

GUTHA. I will buy his corse,
In the most cruel market of our foe,
If gold hath power to buy. Lead me along.

(*Exeunt* OMNES.)

(*Enter* BIGOD, MALET, TUROLD, VITAL *and other* NORMANS.)

BIGOD. Muster our men, and close upon the Duke.
The hill is ours.

MALET. Prick not too far afield.
Learn, from our own designed and feigned flight,
That fliers may betray us.

VITAL. And, turning, stand at bay,
Perhaps on chosen ground.

TUROLD. Already many knights
Are foundered with their steeds in watery pits
Beyond this hill, in the dusk.

VITAL. Pillage and piety
Now on their errands walk abroad.

TUROLD. Up and down
I see the camp-followers stripping the slain.

BIGOD. Now many men are dead for their fat rings,
Whose windpipes else were sound.
MALET. Yonder ghostly fathers
Make their profession live in deeds to-night.
And these poor women wailing for their lords
Remind us of our wounded, and the tears
That will be wet, round many hearths of France.
(*Re-enter* EDITH SWAN-NECK *and* GUTHA, *with the* CANONS *bearing the body of* HAROLD *in a mantle.*)
Upon our standards, close. Revere this pious care.
(*Exeunt* MALET, BIGOD, TUROLD, VITAL *and* NORMANS.)
EDITH. I am sure of it.
CANON. How canst thou be sure,
The body being so defaced, so frightful,
And hacked from head to foot? Is it the King?
GUTHA. I cannot recognise my son in this;
Nor say it is not he.
EDITH. But I can swear to it.
Out of a nation I could single him,
And make doubt my derision. Memory keeps
Every least mark upon his loveliness.
He was a shapely man.
CANON. The pity more
He lieth shapeless here.
EDITH. Bury him underground;

Lest I run mad, conveying him about
Enfolded in mine arms, to part no more,
Until my hands drop off. What creeping thing
Told me he was another woman's?
(*Enter, with* FORCES, WILLIAM *and* ODO, BIGOD, MALET, TUROLD *and* VITAL.)

WILLIAM. Seek out Harold's body.

EDITH. What will ye with the body of King Harold?

WILLIAM. Give it the entombment which is justly due.

EDITH. Then here lies Harold.

WILLIAM. Take it up, William Malet.
Show him full honours as a soldier.
We will not give him Christian burial,
For his oath's fault. Hide him beneath a heap
Of ballast emptied on the reefs of Hastings;
To make a sea-mark and a beacon set
In warning to league-breakers, and a sign
Of the great rectitude wherein we dress
Our person for the royal majesty
Investing in us judge no less than king.
Take the corse away.

EDITH. Wait for my word.

GUTHA. Sir, we are weak and thou art strong.
Behold me here, Earl Godwin's aged spouse,
Too blind with eld to see the piteous death

Of my three sons in battle. But their dust,
Give the poor substance of their dust, for tempering
With tears, which is the sole use of mine eyes;
And let the comfortable rites be done,
For charity.

WILLIAM. It shall be as I say.

GUTHA. Edith, oh, help my tongue! Great Normandy,
I have a treasure hoarded in the earth,
The weight of Harold's corse in solid gold,
I will count down to thee, so he may lie
Within the pale.

WILLIAM. What I have said is said. Call in our bands,
Lest marishes and darkness be the hurt
Of any one of us.

EDITH. Heaven, give me a word
Sharp as a flash of lightning, to cut off
This blatant man. Oh, indignation huge
Smothers me in silence!

MALET. As I remember her, this is
The Earl Harold's paramour his death hath crazed.

WILLIAM. Get hence into the dark and hide thyself,
For shame and safety. Where is Harold's wife?

EDITH. Who is his wife? The Queen of Wales
Crowns Edgar the Atheling in London town,

Behind King Harold's back.

WILLIAM. Speak'st thou this of knowledge?

EDITH. I speak out of my wounds. But have a care;
This is not Harold's corse. I mock and flout
Thy lagging rancour. Seek him on the hill;
Nay, seek him living where he lives to fight.

WILLIAM. Thou shut'st the door after thy steed is gone.
Thou spak'st the truth before.

EDITH. Woe, woe, woe!
I have betrayed my angel to the fiends.
Oh! let me wash his wounds with balm of tears,
And wipe away the bloodstains with my hair,
Nursing this havoc of mortality.
Harold, I am more mangled, and thy limbs
Are whole, compared with my deep wounded love
That bleeds and weeps and bleeds. Thou conqueror,
Because thy insult stoops upon the slain,
For this thou shalt lack hand to close thine eyes
When they are set, staring insensibly.
For this thou shalt expose thy shame in death,
And be forsaken; for this tyranny,
This wanton outrage on my darling's corse.
And I will die to say so.

WILLIAM. Thou shalt not die to say so.
Sir William Malet, do as I have said.

EDITH. Old Gutha, curse thy heart's fill.
Harold, thou shepherd of thy people.
GUTHA. Mine eyes are dim;
Would they were blind.
EDITH. I have waited for thee, Harold.
Sit with me under the elm that is in the garden;
And I will gather thee sorrel and strawberries.
Here is hellebore, and curds-and-whey.
GUTHA. Sweet Edith.
EDITH. Kiss me as often as I kiss thee.
The throstle and the mavis will not tell
How many we take. Thy mother is in the house;
She calls us in. O thou serpent of Hell,
Henceforward be my life one curse of thee;
Look to it, look to it, look to it.
(*Exeunt* EDITH SWAN-NECK, GUTHA, *the* CANONS *carrying the body of* HAROLD, MALET *and a* NORMAN GUARD.)
WILLIAM. What is this place called? Senlac?
ODO. Senlac!
WILLIAM. The *Lake of Blood.*
Here will I sup, just where the standards fell,
And our gonfalon flaps. It is too late
To forage; and we needs must hold the hill;
So here our foes' provision shall be ours.

I am sharp-set. To-morrow we must count
The cost of to-day's gains. From seven years old
I have breathed fight as air; but, till to-day,
I never faced men like the Wolfnothingars,
Harold and his brethren, nor his bodyguard
Who did deny acquaintance with defeat
Even at nearest view. Three chargers fell,
Killed under me. Twice I thought all was lost.
Once I was down, and never thought to rise
Among the living. We, though three to one
Outnumbering them, found them hard convertites,
By their own disobedience to their captain,
In premature pursuit, and our good staves
Alone brought under. On this very site
We'll build a church. Sit down with me, and feed.

(*Exeunt* OMNES.)

SCENE XIII.

Westminster. Before the Abbey.

(*Enter* EDWIN *and* MORCAR.)

EDWIN. Upon the morrow of the Battle of Hastings,
No wonder we look pale. But look not pale;
The Atheling makes present hum and buzz;
The future is our own.

MORCAR. Brother, you dam my words. The Norman strikes
Betwixt the North and us.

EDWIN. I heard he lieth sick.

MORCAR. He did so. But he flings
Malady from him, as a wrestler.

EDWIN. Sayest?

MORCAR. Now the Atheling
Edgar, derived from Edmund Ironside,
Edgar the Atheling and the citizens,
Scared by his giving Southwark to the flames

In passing by, are gone into his camp
To proffer kingdom to him. As I think,
By this he hath it.

EDWIN. We must retire ourselves.

(*Enter* ALDWITH.)

ALDWITH. Make good our retreat.
I will not stay for funeral decencies.
Name not the name of Edgar, though he be
The grandchild of a king. Fly, plot, fight, fall!

EDWIN. Alas, our widowed sister!

ALDWITH. Well-widowed sister;
Happily free from virtue-lacking spouse.
Regard the present. This grandchild of a king—
Whose father lurked in Hungary, afraid
To be the Ironside's heir—gives the regalia,
My brothers both, to William.

EDWIN. How gleaned you this?

ALDWITH. A woman, I made bold to stay and see.
William demurred awhile; saying the land
Was his in law, not fact; and he disdained
A hollow title. At the last he took it;
Saying, "*Where right is, might will wax, anon!*"
Whereat, for so men suffer him for need,
The folk of London cried, "*Long live the King!*"

EDWIN. You heard this with your ears?
ALDWITH. King William, thus elect,
As a first act, as with prerogative,
Grants to the City of London chartered rights;
Proclaims his day of coronation;
Creates his brother Odo, Earl of Kent;
Promotes this worthy and plucks that one down;
And, in his courts of law, mulcts all who dare
Resistance in great fines, as rebels; carves
The manors of our land as venison
To feed his followers on, giving a slice
Unto each free-lance of his greedy host.
EDWIN. We will call the Dane
From Denmark.
ALDWITH. Do so. Now my soul,
Because I may no longer reign a queen,
Would dearly vex the Norman. Be we laid
Like moths' eggs hatching out to worms; and fret
The stuff and staple of his life.
MORCAR. We will surrender;
And, living on his bounty, seem to snore;
But write to Swegen, that the Danish power
Put forth to help us. We will make our nests
In all men's trees.
EDWIN. And plot in hugger-mugger.

ALDWITH. Be then agreed.
Craft carry it, where force hath backward speed!
EDWIN *and* MORCAR. To William, ho!
ALDWITH. It cannot be but to Saint Peter's Church,
Here to this very place, he comes to be crowned.
It is certain.
EDWIN. Or mine eyes fail at need,
Yonder shall be his coming.
MORCAR. Or mine eyes play me false, 'tis he.
It had been better for us to have stood by Harold
At Senlac.
ALDWITH. And fallen with Harold at Senlac. Or at best,
Propt him above our heads, to fall upon us.
Harold loved not our House, nor loved more me
His wife. Oh, we did well in his perishing.
Had I the choice again, again I stayed
You, brothers, here in town, while my false husband
Was, by any one, baited to the death
Upon our Sussex Downs. Whoso betrays
A woman, let a woman betray him.
MORCAR. The Conqueror bursts upon our view.
EDWIN. We have looked upon his bulk at last; he is
A great man.

(*Enter* WILLIAM, EDGAR THE ATHELING, ODO, MALET, BIGOD, TUROLD, VITAL *and other* NORMANS *attendant.*)

WILLIAM. Peace to this realm!

MORCAR (*Aside*). Peace, where there is no peace.

EDWIN. Hail! and good welcome to the Conqueror.

WILLIAM. Ye call me ill, who am your lawful King.
Your reverent knees do but their duty which
Are bent to my receiving; and I take
Duty as duty. I do know you well
From when I sat a guest at Edward's table
While England's countenance smiled on me. Ye are
Of the House of Alfgar, of noble Leofric's line,
And represent that greatness. Come within;
Let your legitimate service now extend
To Edward's just successor. See me crowned,
In acquiescent welcome.

MORCAR. We humbly kiss your mantle.

EDWIN. The hem of it.

WILLIAM. Edgar the Atheling, Aldwith, Edwin and Morcar
And all men else it may concern to hear,
Know that we uphold and respect the law
As no usurper who doth violate
The law in reigning can. Our Norman guards

Stand to their arms without; while ye, within,
See the Archbishop coup me in his craft
With gold more handy than the tempered steel
To bulwark the King's forehead. All, take part.
(*Exeunt, into Abbey,* ALL *except* TUROLD, VITAL *and a* NORMAN GUARD.)

TUROLD. We are to stand here.

VITAL. Before the western door.

TUROLD. It may well be, there will be need of us.

VITAL. Truly I think it.

TUROLD. How long shall we delay, ere we strike; not to provoke a riot, nor to strike too late? What discretion have we to intervene?

VITAL. 'Tis a hive full of stings, this Abbey Church.

TUROLD. He is enthroned there.

VITAL. He is King by acclaim.

TUROLD. The Saxons throng him, within.

VITAL. What noise was that?

TUROLD. I heard nought.

VITAL. He hath not a score of us with him. I hear a noise again. The English are around him.

TUROLD. A tumult arises. Murder!

VITAL. There is no doubt now. A rescue! Treachery!

TUROLD. Beat in the door.

VITAL. Draw forth the English. Lay fire to the houses round; burn them! burn them!

TUROLD. Lay waste their homes. Draw them forth!

VITAL. Our friends do so, already; fires are on all sides.

TUROLD. See, the Saxons break cover.

(*Enter* ENGLISH *and make a tumult with the* NORMANS. *Then re-enter* WILLIAM *with a small* NORMAN GUARD, ODO, MALET, BIGOD, EDGAR, EDWIN, MORCAR *and* ALDWITH.)

NORMANS. Shall they kill thee? Shall they kill thee?

WILLIAM. My friends on both sides, put your hand-staves by,
Against foul weather; sunshine is to-day;
Quench these incendiary fires. Your wisdom squints,
Normans, in England, and is prone to fear.
This nation takes me in her open arms;
Her folk give me the kiss; and, in a ring,
Cry "*Ay*" to the anealing; which fair shout,
No treason to my person, is of joy,
Which ye mistake so widely, who suppose
My life beset. The ceremony is,
Because ye clamour, fulfilled hastily,
With shaking of our knees, but is, no less,
Final. Behold my headgear's beaten gold

That caps me monarch. All thanks unto all.
Now let misprision sleep until I call.
Stand not in knots. (*To the* ENGLISH.) Disperse yourselves.

(*Exeunt* OMNES; WILLIAM *with the* NORMAN *and* ENGLISH PEERS; *the* COMMON SORT *dispersedly.*)

PART III.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR, King of England.
ROBERT CURTHOSE,
WILLIAM RUFUS,
HENRY BEAUCLERC,
} his Sons.
ODO, Bishop of Bayeux and Earl of Kent, Half-brother to William.
ROGER BIGOD.
ROGER DE CRONCHES.
WIGGOD OF WALLINGFORD.
TOKIG, his Son.
PAPAL NUNCIO.
AMBASSADOR FROM THE KING OF FRANCE.
A CANON OF WALTHAM CROSS.
MATILDA, Wife to William.
GUTHA.
EDITH SWAN-NECK.
ALDWITH, Harold's Widow.
BARONS, PRIESTS AND ATTENDANTS.

Scene—In England and Normandy.

SCENE I.

Westminster. A Room in the Palace.

(*Enter* Odo.)

Odo. Now grows our royal William in chief might.
Some glorious long years, at Westminster,
Hallowed to king is this great conqueror.
Brave, fortunate and famous though he be
Beyond example in our instant age,
Look, when a man is highest, he shall fall.
Dame Fortune stands by her unstable wheel.
Do but regard the elemental sun,
The archetype and pattern of pure fame;
Look, his meridian is the threshold of
His downfall; thence is every step more steep
Declining unto earth whence he arose.
Success makes enmity, not only friends.
There is a fate wherein the sufferer
Can never pause, but like the arrow lives
Only in speed. So William's is. Look you,
He must fly forward, or he falls forespent.
On every danger past new dangers lower.

England securely left, he hath tried back
To Normandy to fetch his Duchess dear;
And crowned her queen beside him. In the interim,
To line my money-bags, which I confess
Roasteth the land to a pernicious broil,
I have winked hard at bribery and miscarriage
Of justice on the bench; which William checks;
And I will checkmate William. Now abroad
France groweth resolute to set a term
Upon his climbing path. To which intent,
She puts the strong castle of Gerberoi
In Norman Robert's hands, William's own son,
A son Matilda may or may not favour,
A son unduteous to his ageing sire
Who fatteneth in years, and from campaigns
Comes weary home. Men build towns, castles, halls;
Fill them with feasting; and, even in the surfeit,
Sink from them, like a neap tide, to the trough
Of the scant grave. Now William shall do less
Than he hath done; although his doings yet
Thunder redoubtably. But here, behold,
Sovran Matilda waits for him by Thames,
In London's palace of our Norman King
Whom I holp up, and hope soon to hurl down,
Throning my nephew Robert for my puppet.

Lives wife or mother mistress in the Queen?
Our last disjointed tumult overcasts
Her look of majesty.

(*Enter* MATILDA.)

MATILDA. A warrior's consort wears a crown of thorns.
Is it not wonderful, we, thinking nought
But Alfred's throne was ours; I fetched from Rouen;
William a-hunting, his most chief delight,
In the Forest of Dean,—is it not wonderful,
That on a sudden, in the night, comes news,
York's lost, and her three thousand garrison?

ODO. And William Malet smitten by the sword.

MATILDA. On our supposed order and good rule,
This breaks too rudely. For so many years,
Subjection and revolt risen anew,
Earls and usurpers pulling divers ways,
Shewed the land as a colt unbroken to
Her rider; now the West and Exeter,
Now Kent, now Durham raging. But at last
When, all subdued, the realm appeared a garden,
Edwin and Morcar steal out of our court,
And fling themselves into the cauldron
And melting-pot of wrath. Which justly makes
King William furious, and stern as steel.
We have been sorely tried.

ODO. Mercia, Northumbria and the Dane in league.
MATILDA. Forgotten in their abject quietness,
For so long time till now.
(*Enter* EDITH SWAN-NECK *and* GUTHA.)
What weathered shapes;
What most strange witches should these be?
ODO. I know the women both.
Both were of Harold's house.
GUTHA. Lead me before the Queen.
MATILDA. She speaks to thee.
EDITH. We are face to face.
MATILDA. Why are ye come upon me in this guise
Of mourning and of madness? Are ye mad?
EDITH. Must I accuse the King of sacrilege?
I, Edith Swan-neck?
MATILDA. Audaciously begun!
GUTHA. Six sons I to the wise Earl Godwin bare;
Sweno died years ago; Tostig fell by Harold;
Harold and Gurth and Leofwin died at Senlac;
And Wolfnoth is not. Where are all my boys,
That ye should grudge me the poor bones of one?
MATILDA. Whither leads this? What would ye?
GUTHA. Matilda, Queen, look you, under a mound,
A monument all smelling of sea-weed,
Upon the reefs of Hastings, on the beach,

Uneasily is bold King Harold crampt
Beneath a coverlet of cobblestones.
There I, with Edith Swan-neck, day and night,
Warming the stones against our bosoms cold,
Lie mourning him with moans; and my blind eyes
Weep salter tears upon the salt sea-sand:
So that the ruthless wind makes moan again;
So that the ruthless billows heave a sigh;
And the grey breakers weep upon our necks,
Lamenting with us; or in angry roar,
Inveigh and cry against your cruelty.

MATILDA. The dead are with the dead.

GUTHA. What, art thou childless? Or thy children proof
Against the glancing arrow of fore-doom,
That thou wilt slight me?

MATILDA (*Aside*). Would I were more sure
My son would die not, warring on his sire.
Why makest me aghast, by speaking thus?

GUTHA. Let me gather up the shreds,
The potsherds of the broken crock, my son,
And garner them in consecrated earth
At Waltham he endowed.

MATILDA. Is that your quest? I am your advocate.
I will imagine three of my own sons

Mangled, as thine were, by King William's mace;
So shall I feel your passion in my plaint.
Stand by awhile; William is close at hand.
Is he not so, Lord Bishop?

ODO. William is at hand.

(*Enter* WILLIAM, BIGOD, ROGER DE CRONCHES *and* OTHERS *attendant.*)

MATILDA. And welcome so.

WILLIAM. Welcome me home. Few words,
In love as well as war, shall like me best.

MATILDA. Oh, iron man-at-arms! Odo, complete thy tale.

ODO. Things being at this pass, the North a-wash
In all this turmoil and uncertainty,
William, taking a handful of men, pushed on,
And drugged the Danish King with sums of gold,
So plucking down their mainstay.

WILLIAM. This is past and gone.
I look to set a fleet upon the Dane,
That, overhauling him upon his coast,
Shall gnaw him to the bone. He shall not make
London his hostelry, as Canute the Great
Before my time.

ODO. We struck between
The forces of the earls ere they could join

MATILDA. Oh, what a javelin is my lord!
EDITH (*Aside*). A biting dart!
ODO. Edwin is fled to Scotland, and is fallen
In an unnoted skirmish;
And Morcar fled to Ely in the Fens,
Where the last Englishry, under the outlaw
Hereward, a churl whose lofty courage equals
His love of freedom, are.
WILLIAM. Very well said.
MATILDA. But for the North that, grass-like, shoots new blades
After the scythe—thrice, on thy back but turned,
They proffer war, dispersing when thou comest,
And will not brave it—what hast done, my lord?
WILLIAM. Wrought desolation. Where I found
Tillage and pasture, hamlet, thorp and stead,
Even as a hungry man leaves platter bare,
I left a wilderness, nor none to tell
Their ancient landmarks, every implement
Of husbandry burnt with the crops; the villeins
Die there in homeless famine.
EDITH (*Aside*). Harold
Had never wounded England so.
WILLIAM. Interloping Danes,
Landing, shall lack the wherewithal to live,

And want the staff of life.

ODO. Then turned we West
On threatening Wales, and forced such obstacles
Of nature, as made Senlac Hill a jest
And playground. Two captains, of Aquitaine
And Brittany, with all their hirelings, cried
Out on the service, claiming their discharge;
Which William yielded them in very scorn.

MATILDA. I warrant them, they had enough.

ODO. The roads were torrents, food what each man carried;
The wind emptied our cups ere we could drink;
And flayed our hands alive, till open wounds
Gaped at the knuckles. With his proper hand,
Clearing impediments and hindrances,
William lopped off great boughs out of the trees
Uprooted on the track, and lifted over
The weaker on his shoulders, while the rain
Soaked into us empty of nourishment,
On foot, footsore, and equally without
Or food or sleep.

MATILDA. Oh, for my loving king!

WILLIAM. Let the tale be.

ODO. We burst on Chester
Out of invisible mist; bridled the Welsh

With castles; and turned North.

WILLIAM. A closed book, done withal.

ODO. Thou over-labourest modesty for thy friends.
All we swept across Tweed, and roundly forced
Malcolm of Scotland into vassalage;
Then doubled back to Suffolk, whence we threw
A causeway; and, dryshod over quaking ooze——

WILLIAM. In brief, Matilda, Ely is reduced.

ODO. Morcar forced over-sea; and Hereward chained.

MATILDA. Then is the land at peace.

WILLIAM. Almost.

MATILDA. Earthly Paradise
To us who watch and wait!

WILLIAM. My masons tell me,
To th' coping stone, is Battle Abbey finished
To be a thank-offering. There, Matilda,
Pride and ambition will we consecrate
With lasting glory bright in history.

MATILDA. May I not wear, as a memorial
And jewel, in that festival of peace,
Some sweet concession, where my humour asks?
Promise me that I may.

WILLIAM. Nothing in darkness; say straight what thou wilt.

MATILDA. My lord, bethink thee;

It is a poor revenge to strike the body
That did but what it must, obey the soul
Possessing it.

WILLIAM. What beginning is here,
To lead me whither?

MATILDA. Art thou not satisfied
The mortal part of Harold hath endured
Both desecration and the wintry storms,
Through all these years? Now that our lips are proud
To style ourselves this island's King and Queen,
It is high time that we should woo the honour
Of this particular amnesty, to yield
The whilom symbol of our adversary,
His fleshly body, to the weaver of it,
Unto his weeping mother in her eld,
For rites of burial.

WILLIAM. Dost thou desire it? Dost require it
Of thine own prompting?

MATILDA. I am therein remiss,
Who needed prompting. Do not that all men
Should speak a villainy of thee, saying,
He was a great and doughty king of men,
Upon the battle-field, but afterwards,
A werewolf, and no man.

WILLIAM. Others, with passion,

Required this of me; and I would not.

MATILDA. Why wouldst thou not? Or canst thou name a reason,
Beyond the precedent of evil done,
Why thou shouldst now refuse? Thou wilt hear pleas,
And yield thy judgment to the weightier
That cuts against the grain. Thy pride's to do it.
Best men change readiest on conversion.
Or say thou didst no wrong to gibbet him,
In the dark threatening of dangerous times;
Thou dost wrong now, I tell thee, William,
To keep him above ground, where the salt surge
Rushes between the loose stones of his lair,
So that, I think, his teeth within his jaws
Chatter all winter; or his wretched ghost
Sees the moon in her quarters wax and wane,
Through loopholes, chinks and crannies, where she leads
The ebb and flow, while he with one sound eye
Stares through the crevices, and cannot sleep.

WILLIAM. He is congealed
To unconsciousness and earth; only reproach
Survives to him.

MATILDA. I am afraid of thee;
Die at thy frown, and tremble at thy will;

Since thou didst cow me in the street of Bruges.
But thou shouldst fear, as much as I fear thee,
To be so valiant on a poor dead man.
WILLIAM. Have done with the theme.
EDITH. King, the immortal soul
Sits in the rotting carcase of a man,
Till the Last Judgment. Wherefore hearse we else
The dead so tenderly?
WILLIAM. Back to the tomb,
Thou poor demoniac.
GUTHA. Oh, by my misery and palsied eld,
By sweet compassion and the reverence
Due unto Death, I do beseech thee, King.
EDITH. By dread of retribution, by the shame
Of doing else, I do beseech thee, King.
MATILDA. By our long years of wedded unity;
Our uncontentious board, our stainless bed;
By my dear duty and the awe I clothe
In silence lest men count me full of tales
About my home, I do beseech thee, King,
Grant this our prayer. There is more tyranny
Than kingliness in unrelenting hate.
I have learned kneeling, lesson hard to me;
Learn thou to yield, when Queen Matilda kneels,
And make my learning good.

WILLIAM. Art thou concluded? So be it, an't thee please.
I recollect these twain petitioned me,
In the same sort, on Senlac field. Get hence,
To Hastings first, then as ye choose, to lay
The remnant of Earl Harold where ye will,
No man to check your choice.
MATILDA. To Waltham Cross.
This is my victory.
GUTHA. Oh, I fall!
EDITH. She is dead for joy.
I am a lonely watcher at thy side
Now, Harold.
GUTHA. Not dead, but living after years of death.
WILLIAM. Odo, acquaint the canons with our grant
Of license.
(*Exeunt* ODO, EDITH SWAN-NECK *and* GUTHA.)
Is not the Papal Nuncio here?
BIGOD. He is, dread Lord.
(*Enter* NUNCIO.)
WILLIAM. We will next to the next affair. Your Reverence,
As for the fealty claimed by Rome from me,
Urged by the Pontifex Maximus and the College——
NUNCIO. As for the fealty from thee due to Rome,

That I stand here to claim.

WILLIAM. Know that we will not yield it.
We never promised it; nor can we find
That any of our predecessors here
Allowed so much to his. We weigh our words.
Lanfranc, whom we instal Archbishop of Canterbury
In Stigand's room, advises us in this;
And all our ecclesiastical lawyers
Speak to the like effect.

NUNCIO. This answer must I bear?

WILLIAM. The only answer thou shalt bear from me.
Rome-scot was payable, and so remains.

(*Exit* NUNCIO.)

The laws of the Confessor awe our courts;
The land is in a ledger; and the Church
Served by good men not knowing wealth nor birth
So they be learned and laborious.
Now Ely fallen puts Hereward in my hands.

MATILDA. What wilt thou with him?

WILLIAM. Loose him and let him go.
Tame him with justice; for he had great wrongs;
And greatly hath he wrought in their redress.
By the splendour of God, I love the man!
Englishmen march beneath my banner now;
But my great travail is to bind my statutes

On my rewarded Normans. As thou knowest,
FitzOsbern and the others we have scotched
In practices of malice; but to learn—
Treason in blood!—that a man's enemies
Are they of his own house.

MATILDA. Why wilt thou attend
Interested stories, setting thee so far
From love of my son Robert?

WILLIAM. I aimed not thus near.
Yet I could wish the need were no more probable
Than you insist. But, madam, learn and know,
Not our son's life should stand betwixt my peace
And its attainment. What I note too well
Is the huge treasure Odo hath amassed,
And his swollen retinue, idly declared
To be against the pontificate, to take
The tiara by main force. But I am sure,
Puffed up that I apportion him so much,
He will re-clothe the great earldom of Kent
To be a thorn in my flesh. Which shall not be,
While I am King. Wherefore my officers
Have seized, on my behalf, his hoarded gold,
And locked it in my coffers.

MATILDA. Is this well done, my lord;
Granting it honest?

WILLIAM. I am attached
In men's opinion for dull avarice.
Mammon is mighty; and my power to spend
Makes continents afraid to cope with me.
I will a-forest a great tract of land
To be called *the New Forest*, as a shield
To Winchester, my artificial mine
And store-chest of mine own and Odo's wealth.
None must be rich, but I. The French King grows;
Thy father's heir loveth our son, not me;
Since Mortemer was fought, that *Sea of Death*,
They do forbear me but with an ill grace.
I shall need all my strength.

(*Re-enter* ODO.)

ODO. Hear me, hear me, hear me!

WILLIAM. Why art thou in such majesty of wrath?

ODO. Is there no law in England, no redress,
No scourge, no stocks, no whips for pillage? Brother,
I find my palace rifled. Gold and silver
And precious stones are gone. I stay my arm;
That it may seem more terrible in law
And law-abiding action. William,
I claim from thee the swift restoring of
My plundered treasure; and the punishment
Of those that bear it off.

WILLIAM. Who hath done this thing?
ODO. I almost know the men. But I must name
Men in thy trust to name them. Let thy rod,
Not mine, be on them; for, in verity,
They are thy creatures in thy government,
Who have from thy good government departed
Into such looseness.
WILLIAM. My ministers, my bailiffs,
My sheriffs and what not?
ODO. In their degrees;
They are thy officers who do abuse
Thee and their office and deputed force
Most monstrously.
WILLIAM. Monstrously, if true.
I needs must doubt your error as to fact;
Or else suppose these men commissioners
On our authority, fully allowed
To make the seizure.
ODO. King William,
My royal brother, shall I understand
Thy words for sober earnest?
WILLIAM. Or as jest.
For when I jest, my jests are full of wit;
As hath proved heretofore.
ODO. Juggler with words, thou art;

But keep within bounds, brother.
WILLIAM. Arrest the Bishop of Bayeux;
For insubordinate attempt to hold
Too large a handful in a subject grasp,
And only meet for kings. Advance on him!
ODO. What ho, my guards!
WILLIAM. Thou call'st thy guards to little purpose,
Or thou call louder.
ODO. My guard within, ho!
WILLIAM. Stint. Thy bodyguard and knights,
Thy prepared levy upon sea or land,
Are all disbanded, and enrolled anew
Upon our household. Ye of the presence-chamber,
Seize on our brother's person.
ODO. Is it so, indeed?
Then remember, all ye who stand by,
Whoso lays hands on a peer spiritual,
In act inimical and purposed hurt,
Lieth in jeopardy of lasting flames
That wait upon damnation.
WILLIAM. Fulminate thy fill.
Sirs, make the arrest now. (*Laying a hand over* ODO'S *mouth.*)
Bigod, I say; Roger de Cronches and the rest.
BIGOD. It may be to be damned.

ROGER. Or excommunicate on earth.
I durstn't for my life.
BARONS. Nor I, upon my soul.
WILLIAM. Cravens!
I arrest not the Lord Bishop of Bayeux,
But the Earl of Kent!—In which high rank and title
I dressed thee, and thou wrong'st it.
ODO. Wilt thou grapple me?
WILLIAM. Aye, and shackle thee;
And stall thee, like a stallion in the mews,
Save thou'rt the quieter.
ODO. Had I but guessed this turn,
At Senlac! Merge my treasure with thine own.
Miserliness is lean; but thou dost wax
Gross on't.
WILLIAM. Rich on't.
ODO. Thou hog of fatness,
'Twill not be long thou'lt thread the city gates,
For corpulency. See, how shall the rich
Push through a needle-eye to come to heaven?
WILLIAM. Sir Earl, I'll shew thee to thy lodging.
(*Exit, dragging* ODO.)
BIGOD. The King will brook no second.
ROGER. Madam, I have a song
Tuned to thy private ear.

MATILDA. Sing it, my faithful friend.
BARON. Sir—to judge the times—
How confident he is English and French
Value the integrity of his iron law
Wherein he makes all equal.
BIGOD. In that he dare
Rebuke even Odo with imprisonment,
Whose manifold wrong-doings are well known.
MATILDA (*To* ROGER). So they fall out;
The son and father? This unnatural spite
Afflicts our bed-chamber. Had I known of it,
Before the incurable, committed deed
Of internecine war and robbery,
I would have paid him gold to keep the peace;
As I have done before. O Robert, Robert!
I thank thee, Roger de Cronches.
(*Re-enter* WILLIAM.)
WILLIAM. Keep close, my brother Odo.
Until I lie with Harold and King Edward,
Will be no date to thy captivity.
I am a jealous lover, and my love,
Written in Doomsday Book, will not abide
A rival in fair England. Queen, what cheer?
MATILDA. Why, my lord?
WILLIAM. What is thy passion?

MATILDA. Nothing, dread lord.
Wert thou less lordly, I might fear thee less;
But I might love thee more. Cannot my love,
Being so passionate and being true,
Work with thee?
WILLIAM. What is the time of day,
That thou inventest riddles?
MATILDA. Thou wilt learn, soon enow;
Therefore I tell thee—here's my messenger:
Robert hath broken out in mutiny
Against thy power.
WILLIAM. In Normandy is it?
MATILDA. In Normandy.
WILLIAM. A fool, a whelp
I will trounce once for always.
MATILDA. King of England,
Thou should'st have checked his boyhood. Wilt thou fell
The bull-calf, or the grown bull?
WILLIAM. Thou should'st have checked his boyhood.
Be it mine
To check his manhood, madam, or he check
My dotage.
MATILDA. I hoped, while he was yet a great way off,
Thou'dst go to meet him, crying "*My son, my son!*"
WILLIAM. My son, my son?

I have been true to wedlock, yet my sire
Got better man in me, than I have gotten
In any of my sons.

MATILDA. Wilt thou wage war on him for that?
Stark man, he is mine!

WILLIAM. Wrangle no more. In Normandy?

MATILDA. Alas! In Normandy.

WILLIAM. *Alas* not me *alas!*

MATILDA. Why not,
For this my first-born? Thou preferrest strangers
In blood to lucrative and powerful place;
While he, a prince—Woe that it should be so;
That I must urge it!—lacks the exhibition
And maintenance of princedom! Canst thou blame
Impatience in him who hath years enough,
And feels himself able in courage
To hold a deputation of thy power?

WILLIAM. He is not fit.

MATILDA. What of the years to come,
If he remain unfit? Wilt dispossess
Thy direct lineage and my burdensome
Offspring, as he were lunatic, curtailed
Of his full complement of mind?

WILLIAM. It grieves me much,
That he must reign as Duke of Normandy,

Being our eldest, true-begotten son,
And therefore heir-at-law. But, by my soul,
He is not fit; and woe betide the land
That's damned to suffer him! What hath he wrought
In any war of ours? As foe he is
Far fairer than as friend. Look me i' the face;
And tell me, madam, whether thou be or no
The suckler of this anarchy? Thy money
It is rubs shoulders in Count Robert's purse,
And feedeth his uprising.

MATILDA. It is not so. I would give all I own,
To starve his enmity unto a peace;
So I starved not himself.

WILLIAM. There thou sayest.
Thou'dst succour him. Render me an account,
An if thou durst, of thy expenditure,
To the last farthing. But I see too well
Thou durst not have it seen.

MATILDA. I dare!
And more, for him!

WILLIAM. What more wilt thou dare?
Thou thwart'st the project of thy marriage-vow,
If thou befriend'st him; as I know thou dost.
No, take thy arms from off me.

MATILDA. Heaven strike

My arms from off thee, if it be so.

WILLIAM. Dry thy tears;
Or weep thyself to humbleness. I know
Thou art disobedient; and disloyally payest
The men that march under thy son's command,
Against thy sovran husband.

MATILDA. As thou wilt, believe.

WILLIAM. Lock thyself in thy chamber, and repent.
I have no time to dally with thee.

(*Exit with* BIGOD, ROGER DE CRONCHES, BARONS *and* ALL *Attendant.*)

MATILDA. True to husband and to child!
Oh, when they tear each other, my right hand
Makes war upon my left; and I shall die
Self-slain in cruellest division!
How dared he take me from my father's halls?
Unwillingly I went; and 'twas for this.

(*Exit.*)

SCENE II.

Normandy. Before the Castle of Gerberoi.

(*Enter* WILLIAM, WILLIAM RUFUS, HENRY BEAUCLERC *and* FORCES.)

WILLIAM. Rufus!

RUFUS. My sire, royally and in blood.

WILLIAM. And Henry Beauclerc, both engraft on me,
Like good sons as ye are, against your brother
Elder than ye in years, younger in wit,
So far, what is done?

HENRY. I have made shrill demand
By trumpet, of this Castle of Gerberoi.

WILLIAM. Robert Curthose is not cast out, as lost
For ever; but if this tower fling us words
Saucy or wolfish on our challenge, sharp
Is the answer of our whipping rod.

(*Enter, above,* ROBERT, *attended.*)

RUFUS. Here is Prince Robert's trumpet and himself.

WILLIAM. Wherefore wilt thou be scolded, Curthose, wherefore?

ROBERT. I love not to be scolded, less to scold.
Nor would I have thee keep the cause alive
Why we should vex each other. Death o' my life!
If father and son fall out, 'tis plain the sire
Began the coil.

WILLIAM. Thy meaning, testy boy?

ROBERT. 'Tis the old story. Give me Normandy,
With her revenues. Make me reigning Duke,
With every appanage. Ask I beyond
The effect of that same grant of title, ere
The invasion of England made? If I ask less,
I starve myself as thou starv'st me.

WILLIAM. 'Tis the old story, in truth.
Thou has done homage for Normandy and Maine,
As titular lord of both; the actual grip,
Having and spending of their in-gathered wealth,
Are in the king's hands; nor may they pass down
Unto descendants safely till we die.
Therefore, no more. Normandy is ours by right
Hereditary; which right, from the green tree
Dissevered, were a wrong. England we hold
Even by the might which Normandy gives us
To hold her strongly.

ROBERT. What shall I do? Shall I go beg, go rob?
Go fawn on wealthy neighbours, sell my sword,

All that's my own, unto the Greek, for bread?
'Twere less disgrace to me than to thyself,
If I should do it. What have I to spare,
Of my spare havings? Am I to feed and fee
And clothe my servants on bare promises,
On golden words, on breath, for silver crowns?
The discontent, around my table, grows
Boisterous because I am poor.

WILLIAM. Put folly away.
Be obedient, and share dominion
Everywhere with me.

ROBERT. I will not for ever be
Thy hireling. Vest me in some certain fief;
The increment of which may keep from want
A king's son and his men.

WILLIAM. Thou speak'st thy mind.
What an I gave thee wealth? Thou hast had wealth,
One way and another. What's thy profit in it,
But worthless minions, courtesans, parasites,
Blood-suckers that lap up thy virtue, till thou
Be worthless too?

ROBERT. I live as the world lives;
And would live broader had I broader means.
Is it excess, that I, being a prince,
Should as a prince fare sumptuously, and love

The warmth of the year? Were my life-blood so thin
As that which scarcely flows in Beauclerc there,
I'd skate on it in winter, slide up and down
My arteries for pastime; but mine flows.
And must I then congeal it at a frown
Of thy ill-liking; lest, in keeping warm,
I set the house on fire?

WILLIAM. What askest thou? Give me the sum.

ROBERT. I will have nothing less than Normandy.

WILLIAM. Thou'dst better cool thee with good counsellors,
Than heat thy blood with young men and with wine;
Two excellent things that oft confound each other.
Lend Lanfranc and the Archbishop of Rouen,
Or any thou think'st worthiest, chosen thyself,
A hearing on this matter.

ROBERT. My lord the king,
I came not to hear sermons; of which my tutors
Gave me more than enough, when I learned grammar.
Why rail we here to little purpose? Give
Normandy, ay or no!

WILLIAM. I have said, no.
Wilt thou come to obedience?

ROBERT. No; again, no. These walls shall father me.

(*Exit, above.*)

WILLIAM. Lay to our battering rams. Knock, till it be
Opened unto us.
HENRY. Sire, will he stand a siege?
WILLIAM. I am prepared for it;
But think he'll sally forth.
RUFUS. Will he not hold;
As Harold at Senlac?
WILLIAM. When I bayed Harold there,
We both knew how, at the eleventh hour, the earls
Might interrupt our battle, and swing the beam
The other way; I mean Edwin and Morcar
In London. Which was the cause that Harold stood
Defencible, and why I risked to storm,
Who might have starved him out, not a blow struck,
If amplitude of leisure had been mine.
It was in this way that the earldoms forced
Measures upon us. Therefore never think
Harold so green in war as not to know
Success is with the attack, not the defence,
Or the chief chance of it; which we shall find
Robert is perfect in, and knows no aid
Marching to him. What, is the bastion broached?
(*Alarums within.*)
RUFUS. They issue forth the doors.

WILLIAM. To horse! To horse! Upon them!

(*Exeunt* OMNES. *Alarums continued.*)

(*Re-enter* RUFUS *and* HENRY.)

RUFUS. I am not deeply gashed; but frayed; but galled.
Choler, that I am forced out of the field,
Is the chief pain of it. Oh, I could tear
The hurt even with my teeth, I am so vexed.
Oh, for another day! yet, for to-day,
I must give over riding.

HENRY. I will see thee to thy couch;
Bid squires unarm thee; and, as swift, return
To our much-needing men. 'Tis wonderful
What valour is in our brother's revellers
To overbear tried troops.

RUFUS. A curse upon my scratches!

HENRY. Cure them, not curse them. Come, for health's sake.

(*Exeunt. Alarums within continued.*)

(*Re-enter* WILLIAM *and* ROBERT, *fighting.*)

WILLIAM. Robert!

ROBERT. I hear thee, sire.

WILLIAM. Robert,
Thou art the better breathed. Dismounted so,
The younger misses not the experience

That manages a horse.

ROBERT. Then get to horse again.
A dozen men shall heave thee on his back,
Now in thy over-growth; thou weighest too much,
Upon thy legs to chase or turn about,
But standest like a shock of corn.

(*Enter* TOKIG.)

WILLIAM. Sir Front-of-Brass, the morn is chill;
Lay we about us.

(ROBERT *wounds* WILLIAM *in the hand, and threatens his life.*)

TOKIG. Learn of me, Count! (*Rescues* WILLIAM.)

WILLIAM. What is thy name, good friend?

TOKIG. Tokig, son of Wiggod of Wallingford,
An Englishman serving thee as my king.

WILLIAM. I owe my life to thee. A little while,
Hold, on both sides. Thou art thy father's son,

(*To* ROBERT.)

And arrogant in battle as the fiend,
Not doomed to his defeat. I can forgive
All things to man that sins, but cowardice.

ROBERT. I fear nor God nor thee.

WILLIAM. I grow cumbersome;
And age is clapping irons on my thews.
It is but natural that we give place

To our inheritors.

ROBERT. What composition wilt thou grant,
That we may live at peace?

WILLIAM. Anything that thou wilt.
I ever gave thee thy free way with me.
Shall I upbraid thee? If I was a fool,
I was a father. It were too late now
To school thee, or regret thou art unschooled.
We'll call our hounds from one another's throats;
And then subscribe unto thy will. Look you,
The portion set aside for William Rufus,
That is not yours.

(*Enter* MEN OF BOTH PARTS, *fighting*, WIGGOD *amongst them.*)

ROBERT. Sound a retreat and parley!

(*Trumpet sounds.*)

WILLIAM. Tokig, I love thee well for timely aid.

(*Re-enter* HENRY.)

HENRY. Why call the trumpets? I am from the tents
Where William Rufus, somewhat rudely torn,
Binds up his injuries. What, my great sire,
The blood that we all share, in which we claim
A lineal interest, is it even from thee
Wasting so readily?

WILLIAM. Never speak of it.

Tokig, what ails? Art stricken?

TOKIG. I am slain, sire. (*Dies.*)

HENRY. See where an arrow sticketh in his loins.

WIGGOD. Thou knowest me, King William, who I am,
Thy sheriff, old Wiggod of Wallingford.
Would God thy Norman barons' sons were as mine
In loyalty; but many of them stand yonder,
Though their own fathers keep in step with thee.
Tokig, my boy, my boy, dead ere thy sire:
Thou shouldst have given thine elder way.

(*Exit, with the body of* TOKIG *carried.*)

WILLIAM. Had he not husbanded his latest breath,
This petty pin-prick which I bear had been
But earnest of a deadlier. Give him honours.
Robert, either take Normandy or this;
Either rich Normandy and idleness;
Or the great headship of our expedition
That looks toward Scotland, to King Malcolm's home;
And shortly sets one foot before the other;
Lest Scotland, all despite her homage done,
Strengthen ambitious Denmark who prepares
To strike our coast again. Robert, the work
Shall more become thee, and enrich thee, too,
If thou prove yare in it, than Normandy.

ROBERT. I will look into this; only resolve
To reign while I am young. I have a soul
Daring enough to take the Scotchman's crown;
Give me but gold enough to pay my men.
Then will I add a kingdom to thy sway;
And make myself the king of it.
WILLIAM. I will not stint thee, Robert,
Of land, gold, titles, to thy soul's content.
Only deserve thou, as thou hast this day,
The name of Captain, though in a foul cause.
I trust continuance of desert.
ROBERT. I am of the blood;
And that beats high. Send me against the Scot.
WILLIAM. Rufus lies wounded? Where? I thought to lead
Myself this hosting to the Frith of Forth.
I am much unsound to-day. We must grow old.
(*Exeunt* OMNES.)

SCENE III.

Waltham Cross. Before Harold's new Tomb.

(*Enter* EDITH, GUTHA *and* CANONS.)

EDITH. Friends, you have dug my pit; and laid my bones
Under an everlasting coverture.
I will be still from outcry.
CANON. Thy pit? Thy bones?
EDITH. Mine.
I lived in Harold, and in him lie dead
These many years; first on the beach, now here.
This tomb which we have closed to-day is mine;
And I am closed in it. This new-old tomb,
So late a-making and so newly made
Within your church of Waltham, oh, keep safe;
For he was good to you, who lies at last
Locked in the stony arms of this low vault,
Who was so honour-high. Mother, farewell.
Flanders is your new haven?
GUTHA. Ay, Flanders beckons me.

EDITH. Nothing shall beckon me
From this cold mortuary; unless I go
To beckon William to so low a bed
That is a-making for him.

GUTHA. I and my crazy fortunes and my goods,
The lean, the shrunken savings of my time,
Will ship to Flanders, where much friendship is
Toward Denmark and all William's enemies.

CANON. Lady, your age one of us will attend.
For certain, Denmark is leagued with the Scot
Whom the light Robert, proud and prodigal,
Hath lightly tangled in a flaxen thread,
And left unmanaged. For, the tale goes forth,
Easily, with dishonourable sloth,
His youth hath wasted the prepared power
That should have wasted Scotland.

GUTHA. Will Robert brave
His angry father? Oh, what we shall see
Who live so long! Scotland roused, armed and up,
Were May-Day to King William in rebuke.
Keep my steps, father, or I fall.

CANON. Robert wears armour against disdain.
Northward, his rambling march hath come about;
And, at all costs, returns him safely home.
To Flanders you, for peace, while England's peace

Is made by her last earl, Waltheof I mean,
Sent to the headsman. England's peace is made
By money wrung out of her fruitful fields,
Till William's coffers, crammed beyond content,
Groan to burst open, while her freemen barter
Liberty for a morsel of rye-bread,
In the slave-market. Peace in England's made
By her first men despoiled of their lands;
And secular canons unfrocked. Yet, plain as noon,
Law is made law, and England's peace is made;
I must confess it.

GUTHA. Must we, also? Edith, after all,
Have done with the grave; stir among stirring life;
Our care is now consigned to holy earth;
Leave it so; and, in the Low Countries, tell
How that thou quittedst not till grief was quit
With its fair due. After all, and at last,
We have done what they do who lose a son
And husband. We who have toiled together, child,
Come, grieve, live we together.

EDITH. No, let me sleep my last sleep out.
I am laid waste; I am as one of those shires
William leaves wildernesses.

(*Exeunt*, EDITH *on one side*, GUTHA *with* CANONS *on the other.*)

SCENE IV.

Rouen. Before Odo's Dungeon.

(*Enter* ROBERT.)

ROBERT. Welcome, more southern air! Good day, good day.
I have fought little, and lived well. The Scot
Hath not enjoyed campaigning as I have,
Though the honours rest with him. Which is a proof
Honour is oatmeal, ease more luscious fare.
Some cracks were given; but I weary of it.
Oh, a good battlefield, then a soft bed
Commend to me, not hardships of the camp,
Except to season peace withal. What ho,
Uncle of Bayeux! In this castle lies,
Or snores or rots, Odo, my sire's half-brother,
Walled up and grated as with grills of hell.
Uncle, give answer. Sure these rusty bars
Are like the gridirons that they use below.
Uncle, a word. 'Tis not the safest path
To tread thy dungeon's gullet; yet make I bold;

For thy half-brother, my good father, is
Distasteful to us both!

ODO (*Within*). Robert Curthose! By the voice
I know thee.

ROBERT. And by thy voice I know thee, too;
For I cannot see thee.

ODO. What make you here;
Where I am caged like a wild beast whose glory
Is man's fear of him?

ROBERT. Canst thou not learn patience in it?

ODO. The enforced patience of a dungeon frets
The spirit to impatience; since that thoughts,
Stuffed full of danger, turn upon themselves.
I have nought here to do, but think upon
Past pleasure and my sins. Here have I sat;
Since mine ungrateful kinsman thrust me in,
And locked the damned gate.

ROBERT. Well, well, speak swift,
And leave exclaimings out. I am returned
From keeping court like Caesar, with my powers
Encamped around me; but have little done
To buy the commendation of the King.
I must have red gold, therefore, to my friend;
And steal to thee to stead me. If to-night
I turn the key of thy deliverance,

Wilt thou seize Rouen, in a sleepy hour?
Wilt thou conspire with me? Thou hast a name,
For Senlac's doings. Gold I am sure thou hast,
Or mayst discover in thy bishopric.
Wilt thou break forth, and join me? Swift and quiet
Must be thy answer. Either of us found
Complotting with the other, and not ripe
Yet for the act, rivets a lifelong weight
Of iron on our wrists and ankles.

ODO. I am with thee, lusty boy.
Only brush off this canker from my joints.
I have buried treasure in my church, and means
To make myself terrible, being free;
And will abundant towards it. Hark! The stairs
That wind a crooked passage to this hold
Give greetings to a tread.

(*A whistle within.*)

ROBERT. It is a friend.

(*Enter* ROGER DE CRONCHES.)

Roger de Cronches, what shouldst say now?

ROGER. I should report
King William, by informer or some other,
Is not unlearned in what we do; and is here,
Whiles we do plot.

ROBERT. 'Zounds, fool,

Thou shouldst have whistled earlier.

(*Enter* WILLIAM *armed and attended.*)

WILLIAM. Where is the King of Scots?
Unto this black and filthy cellarage,
Hast dragged the conquered Malcolm? Tish! Away!
And thou, Roger de Cronches whose sire fought well
Upon the deadly little Sussex hill,
Scorning to bear my standard, being too fain
Of blows to take a post, even at my bidding,
That promised quiet honour, art thou joined
With my reprobate son to shirk the Scot,
And to conspire with the quondam Earl of Kent
Here in his prison-house? Kneel not to me,
Robert. Thy mother loves thee; which I think
Means cooling love toward me. Go, if thou wilt,
To greet her; then, an exile from my ground,
Get thee from England, Normandy and Maine.
Not a word, or this prison shall close on
Your living bodies. It is shame enough
Thou hast miscarried our politic wars;
But must thou slip this brindled basilisk
Out of his trap? My Queen Matilda waits.
Kiss her; I will not. Then depart.

(*Exeunt* ROBERT *and* ROGER.)

ODO. Pestilent son of hell,

A waterish dropsy blow thee till thou burst.

WILLIAM. I will not wrong thee so much as to stand by,
And hear thee wake my choler.

ODO. Mountain of loathsomeness.

WILLIAM. Thy necessary gyves are thy excuse
To speak opprobriously. Woe worth this bulk;
Leaches and medicated time serve not.
I wax and wax.

ODO. Like a full moon, confound thee.
Hast any more to say?

WILLIAM. My son Richard is killed in the New Forest
I cleared.

ODO. The wood is accursed for thee.

WILLIAM. This is an accidental stroke.

ODO. It profits me nought
To hear of it.

WILLIAM. Then hear nothing. Let my apothecaries
Straiten the circuit of these fleshly walls
About me, or this body plays me false,
Ere Ireland is yoked to my plough.

(*Exit.*)

ODO. Disease boil thee alive;
And Robert Curthose, after, plague thy lands.

SCENE V.

Caen. A Room in the Castle.

(*Enter* WILLIAM RUFUS *and* HENRY.)

RUFUS. I'll throw you for the double of my loss,
Against that we cry quit for all.
HENRY. I will have my gains;
Not stake on further hazard.
RUFUS. One more throw
Pays all or loses all; by heaven above,
One more throw, brother!
HENRY. Stamp thy foot, and swear;
I throw no more. Swallow thy stammering wrath,
And fling the dice away.
RUFUS. Throw once again, I say!

(*Enter* ROBERT.)

ROBERT. What, brothers, where is the Queen our mother?
RUFUS. Brother, you mar our play. Go to the wars,
And swinge the Scottish lion.
HENRY. Or hath he swinged thee?

RUFUS. The Queen our mother is sick, and will see none.
HENRY. She keeps her chamber, in much discontent
And malady of late.
ROBERT. Why are these tables set? Now, by the fiends
That dog our footsteps, ye do wondrous ill,
If she be sick, to throw the dice to-day.
RUFUS. Thou porcupine, thou hedgehog, art thou there?
Sir Virtue-all-at-once, com'st thou for gold?
Some profit's in't when thou speak'st dutiful.
ROBERT. No profit is in thee.
RUFUS (*Throwing liquor over him*).
Drink deep of that;
And let the Devil preach.
ROBERT (*Drawing*). Which of you, or together?
(*They fight.*)
(*Enter* MATILDA.)
MATILDA. Sheathe, at your mother's word!
What, call me from my bed with clash of swords?
Thou tare, thou thistle in the wholesome crop!
Oft have I sheltered thee, oft lovingly
Thought on thy babyhood, not on thy youth;
Forgotten quite what I disdain to call
Thy manhood; for thou hast too little of it.

How oft? And wilt thou brawl about my gates?
Thou wast in fault, I am sure; give them their due,
Rufus hath better order, and Beauclerc
Will rather hold contention with the bishop
About his book, than handle rude alarums.
ROBERT. Mother, I will swear thy rebuke is just,
If thou wilt stint it. Time is scant with me.
I am a banished man; traitor, they say;
For, if not traitor, I had banished him
That lays my travels on me. In few words,
I must have gold, and ride; or go a-foot.
My father bids me seek my fortune, anywhere
But in his realms; I am pushed out.
MATILDA. Give us good privacy, Rufus and Beauclerc.
RUFUS. Curthose,
Thou mayst inherit Normandy, but get
Nothing by thine own doing.
ROBERT. Had I Normandy,
I'd lease it unto thee, or to the fiend,
To be well furnished to Jerusalem,
Where fighting winneth wealth and holiness;
Both worlds in either hand.
HENRY. See you our mother's face;
How our too boisterous words bruise her strong pride
That stands against our bluster?

RUFUS. Get we hence.

(*Exeunt* RUFUS *and* HENRY.)

MATILDA. Robert, thy mother, I must tell thee 'tis
Thy dying mother, prays thee to use well
The lining of these purses, which are thine,
Since they are hers. These little bits of gold
Are eggs, whereto these leathern bags are nests;
Yet of such quaint and curious breed, they hatch,
According to the bird which warmeth them,
To asps, to dragons, wasps, bees, slimy toads,
War-horses, noble hounds, or, wondrous most,
To friends, hollow or true, or open foes.
Which will you raise? It resteth with yourself.
Only, and, Robert, bear with me, for this
If for no other cause, I know thy spirit
Impatient and not brooking counsel well—
But, Robert, use this quickening gold so well
It shall shew gratitude, and thrive with thee.

ROBERT. Give it me, mother; I have heard patiently.
Kiss me upon both cheeks, and bid God-speed;
I'll to the Court at Paris. Oh, blush not
For the sweet uses of thy gold when there.

MATILDA. Oh, thou art torn away, out of my land!
Couldst not have temporised, wouldst thou not note
The quality of thy father, and smooth over

The deeper pits, even with surface love,
With shallow shews of peace, to live with me?
For I am sure now I must die alone.
ROBERT. Mother, you have long days before you yet.
A many sicknesses are in one life.
Live till I am repealed.
MATILDA. Oh, you talk idly, son.
What a strong cable is a child, how strong
To lash together couples little meet
For mutual householding. But, oh, a wedge
Thou'st been betwixt thy father and myself,
Who in such unifaction had our souls
No flaw had split them else. And yet, for thee,
For thee, through thee we live at severance, wide
As Spring and Autumn that do never touch
Each other, but Winter and Summer bar
Their meeting, and forbid it. So are we now.
This is spun out too long.
ROBERT. Not for me, mother.
MATILDA. No, child, but for me.
My breath comes short. I yearn to speak yet more.
Death pulls me down. Live after me. Live well.
Live happier than I. Yet, Robert, Robert,
I have a treasure hidden.
ROBERT. Wilt trust me with the secret of it?

MATILDA. Why, look you what you are.
My treasure is remembrance of past years,
Ere thou wert old enough to do me wrong.
Now all things come amiss; thy father's age,
Feeding on solitary wrath, is worst.
Judith, my niece, against her husband's life,
Earl Waltheof, prayed the King; the headsman's sword
Hath made an island of Earl Waltheof's head,
Cut from its continent. My other son,
Richard, is dead a-hunting; thy son of shame
Dead likewise in the Hampshire woods; and I
Shall be dead, too, to-morrow, or to-night.
Call Beauclerc; he is tenderer than thou,
Although I love thee.

(*Exit.*)

ROBERT. What, Harry! Ho, Beauclerc!

(*Re-enter* HENRY.)

Get, with what cordial is in thy store-cupboard
Unto our mother. Call her women in.
I must lade up for Paris. Use thy speed.

HENRY. Hast thou this gold now from our mother's hand?

ROBERT. What's that to thee? I have. She needs thy care.

(*Exit* HENRY.)

This gold will buy me welcome with the French.
And I have lemans in the Court of France
Have tasted of my mother's wealth before.
But now no dainty lady is my trade.
Against my father will I Philip whet,
An I thrive none the worse. Maine may be mine,
In my father's lifetime. Anyway, I'll stew
The youth of France in fiery rhapsodies,
Calling their swords to the Vexin, on the border;
Or, from the Louvre, Philip himself shall march,
Or send lieutenants. When the fruit tree sways,
The fruit may fall to us.

(*Re-enter* HENRY.)

What so infects
Thy looks with wildness?

HENRY. Our mother is dead.

ROBERT. Then I am alone in the world. I have partisans,
But nowhere else a friend. I could weep tears,
Believe me, if I had them in my skull.
This is a legacy, and not a gift
I bear here in these bags. Call Rufus in.

HENRY. He is beside the bed. Come, too. Or stay.

(*Exit.*)

ROBERT. By Heaven, I'll lay out somewhat of this gold
In rearing up a tabernacle, fit
For my dear mother's lasting sojourn in.
But I must to the road, where thoughts of hate
Against my father drown my mother's love.
(*Exit.*)

SCENE VI.

Rouen. A Room in the Castle.

(*Enter* ANSELM *and a* FRENCH LORD, *attended.*)

FRENCH LORD. Father, to King William,
Sith the disease of life hath worn him grey,
From Paris are we come on embassage.
How is it with his royalty?

ANSELM. A perfect calm
Docile to kindness; but within, I know,
Is indignation to be put away
As half worn out already while alive.
No wonder that his greatness brooks it ill.
Thorns in the flesh that bate our active use
Tear us, or teach us wonders; for but mark
Two hunchbacks, one wears life to bitterness;
The other learns a martyr's patience,
More easy than this gross, unwieldy body
Environing him to drag it. Noble sirs,
It is pathetical to watch by him.

FRENCH LORD. Is it his wound, or sickness of disease?

ANSELM. A wound of sickness; not of man;
Not irrecoverable as yet; a thought
It comforts me alike to say and think.
Stark is he, unto those who thwart his will,
Stark beyond thought; but loathes to shed men's blood
By legal process. Under quiet power,
He quashed the Bristol slave trade; he endures
No robber by no means; grant that he love
The tall red deer even as he were their father,
And they not beasts that perish; in the sum,
He justifies the conquest he hath made.
Canute and he came in like ravening dragons,
To rule like archangels.

FRENCH LORD. We in France have heard
His thoughts are noble, and his deeds conform
To what should serve his thoughts' nobility.
Our King accounts of him as his chief Chief.
Can we approach?

ANSELM. William will never brook
Bodily suffering to overrule
His will to give France audience. Boldly speak.

(*Exeunt* FRENCH LORD *and* ATTENDANTS.)

Like a triumphant lion upon men,
Hath William paced upon his prostrate foes,
Being a wise and mighty law-giver.

But now he sickens towards his latter days;
And that falls on him which must fall on all.
Now bay the wolves aloud, and do despite
About the Prince of Beasts.

(*Re-enter* FRENCH LORD *and* ATTENDANTS; *and* WILLIAM *sick, attended.*)

WILLIAM. Jeers? Merriment? And scoffs?
Makes the King game of my self-loathing grossness?
Tell Philip's majesty, on bended knee,
William, at his churching, will such candles light
In St. Geneviève, as Paris shall suppose
Them fire and brimstone raining down from heaven,
To level her under a Dead Sea. Take
The King good thanks for asking of my health.
My men! Guard them beyond our gates.

FRENCH LORD. God save the King!

(*Exit, with* ALL ATTENDANTS.)

WILLIAM. Slow from my weight of body as I am,
I will be nimbler than the youth of France.
Restore my health for it.

ANSELM. This is not good.
There is no end to conquest; but the hill
Grows as we climb.

WILLIAM. One more king shall fall!
Then I will to my prayers. Rufus, Robert, Henry—

Matilda did abet my son, I know.
I am not angry; is he not our child?
But now the King of France grows malapert,
And roars like a young lion. Time will tell
Whether I silence him. I lie here, like
A ship of war aground on Goodwin Sands,
My size confounding me. Anselm,
King Philip stirred Robert's rebellion;
France, too, annoys our borderers of late;
Which are no wrongs without a remedy
To be found for them. I am roused in my lair.
Anselm.

ANSELM. My lord and King?

WILLIAM. I am grievous sick.
Comes not Matilda nigh to nurse my grief?
We parted frowningly; there were cross gusts
Of spleen about our son; and we whose concord
Held through all other storms, what, must we clash
At last? O Anselm, can she bear such malice,
Who was so good a wife, so tender-true,
Because I rated her? She ought to obey.
Remote abroad is our one curse of wedlock,
Our too-disordered Robert. Where is Matilda?
I have worshipped her throughout. Baldwin of Flanders,
I have been a good son-in-law to thee;

And raised thy daughter even with myself.
Anselm, where is Matilda?

ANSELM. I had as lief not say.

WILLIAM. She doth neglect my bed. It is small wonder;
My words were over bitter.

ANSELM. Charge no neglect
Against her. I have kept it from thine ears,
Whilst thou art feeble in thy malady;
But she is dead.

WILLIAM. Then it is time I turn my face to the wall.
Kiss me, Anselm.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE VII.

Waltham Cross. Before Harold's Tomb.

(*Enter* EDITH SWAN-NECK *and* ALDWITH.)

EDITH. Who is beside me here, at Harold's tomb?
ALDWITH. Aldwith, sometime Queen;
True wife to Harold called the Wolfnothingar.
EDITH. Thou hast no standing here.
ALDWITH. Better than thou.
EDITH. Watch here, embittered sister; I must snuff
The Norman air. Lying here, as I do,
I dreamed I saw the dead body of William
Carried to earth, apparelled in his gear;
I saw the body of William refused a tomb
And sepulture in his great church of Caen,
Distrained for debt unless it shall be paid.
I am wise as a raven, and will croak
Ill bodings in his ear. I cannot doubt
But he draws nigh his limit.
ALDWITH. Good speed to thee; howso
Thou art demented, and dost catch at air.

Here watch I. Harold was my lord indeed,
Beyond gainsaying, playing false with thee.
Edith Swan-neck, many a time, in thought,
I plucked thy locks by handfuls from thy scalp;
And ploughed thy wasted cheeks up with my nails;
For in my lack of love is| ealousy
And hunger even for that I never gave.
But I forget this now; and only hate
The Norman, chiefly for men honour him,
And speak good of him, wormwood in the taste!
I would destroy his household and his House.
His wife's decease of late was balm and honey;
My brothers are foredone; my hope decayed.
Leave me; I have the grandeur of a queen
Who hath outworn her state and rich attire,
Even to the soles of her shoes. Look on my rags;
Are they not thin as thine? This is my pride.

EDITH. Pride and a fall. I am for Normandy;
Called by prophetic dreams. I will land there.
I will meet William sprung of Rolf. I leave
Thee and this, for ever.

ALDWITH. Depart for ever.

EDITH. Who comes, i' the dark?
None; yet mine eyes see, as it were a ghost,
Edgiva, Harold's sister, sometime Queen

Of England, come unto this narrow house,
Now hall and bower of her father's House,
To hang a wreath on't, in remembrance. Next
Comes limping Gutha, if mine eyes were true;
Yet I know these but ghosts. Relieve my guard,
By Harold's tomb; stand sentinel, and die.
(*Exeunt severally.*)

SCENE VIII.

Before Mantes.

(*Enter* BIGOD, WIGGOD *and* BARONS, *with* FORCES.)

BARON. Well arrived, Lord Bigod, before Mantes. Stout Wiggod of Wallingford, how love you the service on the Gallic side of the Channel?

WIGGOD. I love it well; and I love our King well. My son Tokig died in the King's rescue before Gerberoi; and I love that well, too.

BIGOD. Well said, bold Englishman.

WIGGOD. An Englishman I am. Let leeches have it King William may not safely mount his horse; and albeit he comes not thereon but with good help, yet his heaviness, if it lie at his heart, he hath put it away behind his back. Send he live but two years longer, he shall round Ireland in his kingdom, and give us peace in our islands. In the which hope is the brave Hereward now upon this muster-roll.

BARON. Like Summer risen on Winter, the sun on dark night, the soul in the resurrection, is William now

burst anew into the field. Town after town, on the French side of the Norman marches, have we fired. And all in answer to the French King's mocking jest.

BIGOD. Do not think so. This was foreseen from long, between the princes; which they played on in their embassage, to sharpen their wits while their swords waxed no blunter.

BARON. Stout swords! Now shall we press to the breach. Now shall this little town of Mantes join its neighbours, and blaze away in smoke. See, our torch-bearers set their links to the thatch; our foremost horsemen clash into the street; and here, at the call of his fate, rides King William to lead us.

BIGOD. Perhaps, in these blazing towns, his orb and luminary maketh his own sunset. Who said that Robert is with the French?

(*Enter* WILLIAM, WILLIAM RUFUS *and* HENRY *attended.*)

WILLIAM. Forward, into this town of impudence,
That flouts us with such insufficient force.
Rufus, lead our first company.

RUFUS. Forward!

(*Exit, with* HENRY, BIGOD, BARONS *and most of the* FORCES. *Alarums heard and continued.*)

WILLIAM. Great little town! How far away seems now

The place where I began. My Queen is gone,
With words between us I could wish unsaid.
I have kept war without and peace within.
I will not foster corpulence, to sleep
Out lazy hours, as my physicians
Advise is needful for my ailment. Rather
Will I hide spurs deep in my weary flanks.
Firmly, as I bestride my steed to-day,
So may I bestride France!

(*Enter* EDITH SWAN-NECK.)

Woman?

EDITH. A woman whose wit died
Of wounds at Senlac,
How come I hither?
Hist!
Fleet steed, fast ship
Men lend for fear of me.

WILLIAM. Midsummer madwoman!

EDITH. Madman thou!

WILLIAM. Well, stand aside!

EDITH. This third time I see thee,
I see Death as thy double,
Beside thee dancing.

WILLIAM. So will he often be in battle

EDITH. He bounds as a war-horse.

Thy Queen is quelled;
Thou art the quarry;
Cunning is Death in craft
To catch us at last.
Harold we bathed as for bed,
And buried him,
Winding a cloth for warmth
About him, at Waltham;
And cradled him in the crypt,
At Waltham Cross,
Where the Wolfnothingar
Waits for thee.
There will bloodshed and blows
Be betwixt you;
Thy ghost, and the ghosts
Of the sons of Godwin!

WILLIAM. Give place, thou crazy and unhappy wight
Whose brain is withered as thy ashy hair,
With dreaming dreams. Stand down.

EDITH. I have said.

(*Exit.*)

WILLIAM. Give her some care. We will obtain by merit
The freedom of this town.

WIGGOD. Can she live?

Her very life by her deep grief is rent,
And lets her spirit forth.

(*Exit.* *Re-enter* BIGOD.)

BIGOD. My liege, the place is carried.

WILLIAM. Set fire to every building not yet burnt.
This evening, I will ride into the street,
And watch the ruins fall, to make waste land,
Such as gapes empty 'twixt the Scot and us,
'Twixt France and Normandy; which interdicts
Further alarums.

(*Exeunt* OMNES.)

SCENE IX.

Rouen. An upper Chamber.

(*Enter* RUFUS *and* HENRY.)

RUFUS. Our sire hath a wound, then?
HENRY. Riding into the sack
And burning of the town, his Flemish destrier
Trod on live embers, and, rearing in pain
And fright, as if to paw the heavens, flung him
Foul of the pommel, and so heavily,
The organs and the engine of his frame
And body burst asunder. That he live
Is more in virtue of unconquered will,
Than by the might of flesh.
RUFUS. Make ready, for the nonce.
(*Enter* WILLIAM, *borne by* PRIESTS, *with* LORDS *and* ATTENDANTS.)
WILLIAM. Val-ès-dunes, Varaville, Senlac—I lose count
Of my pitched battles—and the sack of Mantes.
Weakness more horrible to me than pain,

To die in bed! Are there no charges, stands,
No ambuscadoes for me? Oh, to pluck out
This living agony that, like a caitiff
Vowed to torment and execute on oath,
Tortures my entrails! Yet no rebel groan
Shall blab of this to man. Lie quiet, king,
Thou art William the Conqueror. My lads,
My brave brain labours at our council board.
Robert, in herison, takes Normandy.
Henry Beauclerc, to legacy, receive
Five thousand pounds in silver from my hoard;
Which, Rufus, pay. William, our marrow, thou
Hast England to thy portion, which jewel
Irradiates the world's breadth. I bequeath
That blood-bought realm to none; but seize thou on it,
Under no testament but the strong hand.
Let loose our prisoners, only except
The Bishop of Bayeux.

PRIEST. You war upon your soul's repose,
Excepting any; and this a churchman.

WILLIAM. He were best chained; yet my last act shall mete
No half-measure. Enlarge him with the rest;
I cannot govern after death; but woe
Attends his letting forth. My time's too short;

For I have terms of peace, more weighty than
Odo's enfranchisement, to make with heaven.
I have not kept the letter nor the spirit
Of God's strict law in full; yet, in the main,
My deeds can cry loud, to my Judge in court,
That they are just. I feel my trunk and limbs,
Yea, and the hairs of my head are turned to stone;
And my last syllable said, till the Last Trump.
By the splendour of God—(*Dies.*)

RUFUS. Father, thy ring. To Winchester, post haste,
Before his death be known; where, by this ring,
I'll seem his mandatory; and will seize
His treasure, which is power, into my hands.

HENRY. I will along, to purse up that is mine.
My father's will shall not be set aside.

(*Exeunt* RUFUS *and* HENRY.)

1ST BARON. We shall hold Rouen, and seize Normandy,
In the Count Robert's right and interest.

2ND BARON. We ride with the Prince Rufus.

3RD BARON. With Beauclerc we.

4TH BARON. I am for Paris, to Curthose.

(*Exeunt* LORDS.)

1ST PRIEST. God is God of the living, not of the dead.

2ND PRIEST. Brethren, let us get hence.

3RD PRIEST. I am strangely afraid.

4TH PRIEST. All forsake him and fly.

(*Exeunt* PRIESTS.)

1ST ATTENDANT. We are in the Jews' hands for his Danegeld. Let us despoil the chamber and the corse, of all we can lay our hands on; then make good our escape.

2ND ATTENDANT. For mercy's sake, an thou lovest me, pitch the body downstairs ere we lift a finger. I durstn't rob him to his face, for my life. He moves again!

1ST ATTENDANT. No, never again.

(*Exeunt, dragging the body of* WILLIAM.)

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